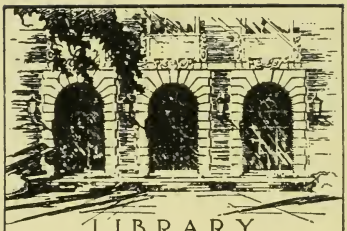
823
B61v
v.2



LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
B61v
v.2

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

http://www.archive.org/details/victimsofsociety02bles

THE

VICTIMS OF SOCIETY

BY

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

"'Tis you that say it, not I; you do the deeds,
And your ungodly deeds find me the words."

LONDON

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY CONDUIT STREET.

M.DCCC.XXXVII.

823
B61v
v. 2

THE

VICTIMS OF SOCIETY.

FROM THE MARQUISE DE VILLEROI TO MISS MONTRESSOR.

Your voluminous packet has been following me to three or four *châteaux*, where I have been paying visits; so that it is now several weeks since it was written. It was, nevertheless, as all your letters are, very acceptable; and I thank you for the lively sketches it contained.

Your *séjour* in England, *ma chère* Caroline, will render you a philosopher of the cynical school; for your *apperçu des mœurs Anglais est un peu mechant, mais bien amusant. C'est un genre de philosophie,* which begins to be much

à-la-mode here, but which it requires great tact and *esprit* to display gracefully and successfully.

You possess both in a pre-eminent degree; which you must not be offended if I attribute to your long residence in France, where they are indigenous: while in your island they are exotics, that rarely flourish, and still more rarely are successfully exhibited.

Chez vous, ma chère, notre esprit, when imported, is like our fashions, which are so clumsily adopted, but not adapted, that they disfigure, rather than embellish, your compatriots. Witness the bedizened English ladies, whose laborious exertions to appear well dressed, and still more laborious efforts to shine in conversation, in the *spirituelles réunions* in our gay capital, have afforded, and still afford, us so much amusement.

Ces pauvres dames, with that want of perception which is one of their principal cha-

racteristics, always fancied that we were laughing *with*, and not *at*, them; and returned in triumph to their land of fogs, as dense as their wits, to relate their *succes à Paris*.

We were reverting to some of these miladies, last evening, at *la* Duchesse de Mirrecourt's, when she related, that one of them had gravely told her that she had studied philosophy with a Scots professor, that many of her countrywomen did the same, and that she was surprised that the French ladies did not follow their example.

"Then you imagine, *ma chère dame*, that we French have no philosophy?" asked *la duchesse*.

"I confess that such is my impression; for you are all so gay, so cheerful, that I conclude you have not studied so grave a science," replied milady.

" Oh! then, we are to attribute to philosophy, that gravity, *tristesse*, and *ennui*, *que vous nommez*, blue devils," said *la duchesse*, with an arch smile, furtively directed to her coterie.

" Yes," answered milady; " *we* are superior to the gaiety that characterises your nation; *we* reflect, we feel, more than you do."

" *Enfin*, you are philosophers, and we are not," resumed *la duchesse*. " I admit that you ought to possess much more philosophy than we do, for you expend so much less. Rarely, indeed, do you use any portion of this treasure: witness your oft-beginning, never-ending, murmurs against your weather, your climate, your *ennui*, and all the other inevitable ills to which people are subject; while we apply all the philosophy we can acquire to support, or forget them. We expend our philosophy like prodi-

gals, and it adds to our enjoyments; you hoard yours like misers, and it gives you no advantage.

"You boast of your superior wisdom, and smile somewhat contemptuously at our frivolous gaiety: while we envy not, but pity, your sombre gravity; as we believe that the people who support the ills of life with the most cheerfulness, and forget them with the greatest facility, are the happiest, and, consequently, the wisest. *You* are above this happiness, and *we* are superior to the *ennui* which sends half your nation wandering into every clime; as if locomotion could relieve a malady that arises in the discontented mind, which pursues you in all your migrations. Yet you assert that you travel to be amused; but, instead of finding interest, or amusement, in what you behold, you discover only faults. Every thing is compared with your own country, — that country

whence your *ennui* drove you, and which, while in it, you decry, but the moment you desert it, you exalt. We, however, always find our *belle France* the best of countries, and, consequently, rarely leave it."

Notre bonne duchesse has a habit of never citing the arguments employed by her adversary, unless they are so weak as to be easily refuted; so, as she did not repeat what defence your compatriot made, I am led to conclude it was not so deficient in sense as the few phrases our friend selected for quotation might otherwise have induced us to suppose. The *duchesse*, however, more than insinuates that she silenced milady;—a possibility, I think, less doubtful than the implied assertion that she also convinced her.

Notre chère Paris is so much changed since you left it, that it is hardly to be recognised. We royalists totally avoid a court where, at

the *fêtes* given, one may be jostled by one's *coiffeur*, *modiste*, and *cordonnier*, in the uniform of the national guard, profaning, by their presence, those *salons* which, since the restoration, have been sacred to the *noblesse*. With all our modern philosophy, such *rencontres* would be more than one of *l'ancien régime* could support: hence, we carefully abstain from the Tuileries, and have the credit of *dévouement* to the exiled family; while, if the truth were told, a horror of finding ourselves in *mauvaise compagnie* operates much more strongly in attaching us to the old order of things.

Of politics I shall say nothing, except that Louis Philippe proves the truth of your Shakspeare's assertion,—

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

Florestan is still *l'esclave de la* Comtesse

D'Hauteville, who, I suspect, encourages his natural propensity to extravagance. I have lately seen her wear some very fine pearls, which, I am sure, were his gift; and I have observed certain symptoms of a derangement in his finances, that prove *qu'il est gêné. Pauvre* Florestan! I retain a warm attachment to him, though I smile when I compare it with the ungovernable passion I felt when we were married. *C'est malheureux que l'amour ne puisse pas durer! Apropos d'amour, le duc m'est toujours dévoué,* which is a great consolation. His mother lately found a rich heiress for him; an acquisition that would have been very acceptable to his finances, which are not very flourishing: but he would not hear of her proposal: — a rare example of attachment, in our days of selfishness.

I was almost tempted to pity your poor little friend Augusta, at being talked into a

marriage for which she had no predilection — *pauvre petite! Mais*, it will be all the same in a year hence; for she will then, probably, feel less indifference towards her husband than if she had loved him when she married; and will be spared all the annoyances to which women who love their husbands are subjected.

Heigh-ho! Do you remember how jealous I used to be of Florestan? Never shall I forget my despair at discovering his first infidelity. I thought I should die—ay, and wished it too, simpleton as I was; and now, I can see him lavish on another those attentions that were once all mine, and see it without a pang. We are the best friends in the world; and, after all, this is the next best thing to being lovers. It took me a long time, however, to make this discovery; nor do I think I should have arrived at it had not the *duc* come to my aid.

Nothing helps to make us forget an old love so much as a new; and I feel such an attachment to the *duc*, that it is only when I recall to memory the still more vivid and wild one I once entertained for Florestan, that I am forced to recollect the melancholy truth, that love *can* change.

Marry some *très riche et puissant seigneur*, *ma chère* Caroline, and come to Paris, where you will be joyfully welcomed by

Votre amie affectionnée,

DELPHINE, MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

Mon mari vous dit mille choses aimables.

THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE TO THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD.

You will be glad to hear, my dear Mary, that the poor child I have adopted thrives apace, and is really a source of comfort to me. His fondness of me, too, dear little fellow, increases; and he claps his hands, and crows with joy, when I appear. One half-hour spent in playing with him in my dressing-room, is worth whole hours spent in crowded *soirées* and balls; which, if it were not for Lord Nottingham, who has kindly undertaken to initiate me into the modes, customs, and persons of the new world into which I am launched, I should find insupportable indeed. Lord Annandale insists on my being present at all their *fêtes*, rallies me on my preference for solitude, and seems desirous to fill up every moment with some new pleasure, — the search after which

I find as tiresome as he appears to think it agreeable.

He told me this morning, that I must be guarded in my observations in society, and not display my rusticity with regard to its general usages, under penalty of being exposed to its ridicule,—" a penalty," he added, looking most seriously, " more to be dreaded than all others, being one which is never overcome."

I asked to what he alluded, wondering what I could have said, to subject myself to so grave an exordium.

" Did you not observe," he replied, " how Lord Henry Mercer laughed when you made that very *naïve* speech about Lady Harlestone? a few more such speeches will render you the talk of all the clubs; nay, more, the subject of their merriment. I thought the Comtesse of Hohenlinden would never have ceased laughing, when Mercer told her of it."

I felt my anger a little excited, at learning that I had been ridiculed, while ignorant as to the cause; and my reflections led to his making me a disclosure that has shocked and disgusted me. Yes, Mary; the man who has vowed to love and protect me, and whom I have vowed to love, honour, and obey, has torn the bandage from my eyes, by informing me, that nearly all the women in the circle in which I live — that circle into which *he* has led me — are supposed to have attachments with the men whom I, in the simplicity of my heart, believed to be their husbands, judging from the familiar attentions I witnessed — and which attentions I thought, even from husbands, too familiar for public exhibition!

"And, knowing the conduct of these women," said I, "you could permit them to approach me!"

"You must, really, my dear Augusta,"

was his reply, " learn to understand society. The ladies you allude to are the most fashionable in London, — universally sought after and received, and living on the best terms with their husbands. Why, then, should I object to your associating with them ? Such an absurd piece of prudery would expose me to the ridicule of all London, were I so wanting in tact as to put it in practice."

" If the ladies in question," replied I, and I felt my cheeks glow with indignation, " are sought after, and well received, and live on the best terms with their husbands, it must be because, adding hypocrisy to vice, they deceive the world, and the husbands they betray."

" By no means : society has no right to pry into the private conduct of any woman whose husband has not denounced her ; and most husbands have too much philosophy, or good-nature, to be severe towards their wives,

who, grateful for their forbearance, repay it by similar indulgence. Lady C. receives Lady D., because it is agreeable to Lord C., who, in turn, permits the constant presence of Mr. E., and thus domestic harmony is preserved, *esclandres* avoided, and husbands and wives, who no longer could be lovers, instead of proving a source of mutual *gêne* and torment, become friends."

"You surely jest," said I, "and are imposing on my inexperience, by the statements you have just made."

"*Pas de tout, ma chère;* I assure you I have only stated the fact. Nine out of every ten married pairs belonging to *our* circle, stand precisely in the position I have described, which is the secret of the good understanding that subsists between the greater number of them."

"And you approve of this odious, this demoralising system?" asked I.

"Why, as my disapproval would not change it, and would inevitably draw down on me the hatred of all our *clique,* I think it more prudent to submit *en philosophe.* People never forgive those who would either amend or instruct them; and, as I wish to enjoy life, I am content to let others please themselves, in preference to rendering them displeased with me. Besides, *you* are too charming, and *I* am too sensible of your charms to be likely to take advantage of the latitude allowed to Benedicts, or to have eyes for any other beauty."

As he thus spoke he kissed my hand, with an air as gallant as that with which *le premier danseur* of a *ballet* kisses *la premiere danseuse;* but, seeing the grave, and, perhaps, contemptuous expression my countenance assumed, he changed his tone, and said,—

"Do not look so very much shocked, I beseech you; let us take the world as we find it, my dear Augusta, and be content with being as good as we can be ourselves, without trying to become reformers of others."

"I am not so Utopian as to expect to reform society," resumed I; "but I can see no necessity of associating with people whose principle and conduct are so diametrically opposite to all that I have ever been taught to respect."

"Why, you surely would not be so unreasonable as to wish me to close our doors against all the fashionable world, because they have emancipated themselves from prejudices, the acting up to which was incompatible with happiness?"

"Prejudices!" I exclaimed; "is it possible, Lord Annandale, that you can thus confound virtue and vice? that the chastity of a

wife, and the fidelity of a husband, can be considered as prejudices?"

"Really, my dear Augusta, your inexperience makes you view things in so strange a light, that there is no reasoning with you. Do not, I pray you, become that most disagreeable of all things, a prude; or that most repellant to my nature, a sectarian."

So saying, he quitted the room, leaving me to chew the cud of bitter, not sweet, fancies; and to regret, still more than ever, the infatuation and wilfulness that led me to bind myself to one I can neither love nor respect. Now is explained to me the cause of all that freedom of manner, that levity, and, above all, the easy indifference, with which the people I meet conduct themselves in society.

And it was a husband's hand who removed the veil from my eyes, and shewed me guilt in all its hideous deformity, of which I never

should have formed an idea! But, now that it is exposed to me, ought I to consent to receive beneath my roof persons of whose vices I can no longer entertain a doubt? Do I not owe it to virtue, nay, to myself, to avoid them? nor give the sanction of my presence to their conduct? I seem to have grown old within a few hours: this fatal knowledge of evil has shocked and grieved me; and the very air I breathe appears heavy and oppressive, from my newly discovered sense of the crimes that contaminate it.

Lord Nottingham cannot, surely, be one of those that Lord Annandale has been describing. No; he too much resembles Lord Delaward to have any sentiment in common with those around me. He found me yesterday with little St. Aubyn on my knee, who, as usual, was crowing and smiling to shew his love for me. The poor little fellow can now say, "mamma,"

very plainly; and, proud of his success, frequently repeats the endearing epithet. Lord Nottingham took him in his arms, played with, and kissed him, and quite won the child and his nurse's heart, by his notice of him.

I like to see men fond of children; it proves a kind heart and gentle nature. Lord Nottingham does not appear to esteem any of the women who most frequent the Comtesse Hohenlinden's; he treats them and her, too, with distant civility, while they are more condescending in their politeness to him, than is, in my opinion, compatible with the dignity of the sex. But what know, or feel, they of feminine dignity?

Caroline Montressor declares herself quite satisfied with London, though she complains that the women are not *spirituelles*, nor the men sufficiently *empressés* in their attentions to them. The *comtesse* is a very old and intimate

friend of hers, and they pass much of their time together. There is a levity and coarseness about this lady, that, in spite of her good-humour and gaiety, are very offensive to me; but Caroline resents, as a personal affront, any animadversions of mine on the subject.

In three months, my dear father and mother will be in town. How I long to find myself in their arms again! I feel as if I had been years, instead of a few weeks, absent from them; and as if I had, during the period of our separation, existed in a cold and chilling atmosphere, that rendered the sunshine of their affection more than ever dear, and vitally necessary, to your affectionate friend,

AUGUSTA.

THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD TO THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE.

My dearest Augusta, — I have reflected long and deeply on your last letter. I feel the painful dilemma in which you are placed; and, though I perfectly agree with you in thinking that it would be most agreeable, as well as most virtuous, to avoid all intercourse with women of whose vices we are not ignorant; still, in the present state of society, and, above all, with a husband who attaches so much importance to its suffrages, prudence inclines me to advise you to be content in refraining from all intimacy with the parties in question, and not occasion an *esclandre*, by shutting your doors wholly against them.

In large assemblies, persons meet very much as in the round room of the opera, Vauxhall, or

any other public place of resort; and, though the contact may not be agreeable, it does not entail intimacy: a dignified courtesy of manners, equally removed from rudeness as from familiarity, will repel freedom, and preclude offence.

Let your reserve be attributed to domestic habits; to, in fact, any motive, rather than one so pregnant with danger to her who avows it, as a censure of the conduct of those who, conscious how justly it is merited, never forgive the inflicter, and revenge the implied slight by every means in their power.

Receive the ladies whose presence society still sanctions, though virtue disclaims them; but receive them only in large parties, and avoid all approaches to intimacy with them. This sacrifice of your own feelings of propriety must be offered up to preserve peace with your husband, whose sentiments being totally op-

posed to yours, I fear there is no chance of inducing him to adopt your views.

Wholly to oppose his projects would be to embitter your home, or, perhaps, banish him from it; leaving him to the influence of those who, from your exclusion of them, would be most irritated against, and disposed to injure you.

The unfortunate intimacy of Miss Montressor with the Comtesse Hohenlinden increases the difficulty of your position. Among all the women whose impropriety of conduct has served to throw an odium on the sex, there is not one whose career has been marked by a more unblushing perseverance in vice; or by a more open disregard for the appearances which, if they cannot redeem, at least conceal, its grossness, than this lady.

Her high birth and distinguished position have only tended to draw public attention still

more to the glaring errors that she takes, indeed, no pains to disguise. Hence, her being known to be a frequent visitor beneath your roof, must subject you to many disagreeable animadversions; and give cause of additional offence to any of, or all, the not more culpable ladies you exclude.

Under these circumstances, I would advise your candidly expressing your sentiments to Miss Montressor, with sufficient firmness to make her respect them.

You must be continually on your guard, my dearest Augusta, not to form habits of intimacy with any man, however amiable and good. This restriction is rendered indispensable by a state of society, in which the worst offenders are naturally the severest judges, for they estimate others by themselves; and it is almost an axiom in human character, that it acquires suspicion in proportion as it loses

innocence. Remember, then, that you live among those who are ever prone to regard an approach to friendship between persons of different sexes with uncharitable eyes. They are sceptics in the sympathy of virtue, precisely because they are devout believers in the connexions of vice.

The consciousness of innocence, though it enables us to bear up against calumny and injustice, cannot prevent the anguish of the wounds they inflict, wounds no salve can heal, and from which no time can smooth away the scar.

Appearances must be strictly preserved by the innocent (who, from conscious rectitude, are too often the persons most liable to neglect them); lest the guilty attempt to palliate their own improprieties by directing attention to the semblance of error in the good.

The most really immaculate woman, who is

inconsiderate enough to admit the daily visits of any man, or to permit his attentions, however respectful, to become remarked in public, must not be surprised if she is confounded with the most guilty; who are naturally anxious to blazon abroad the seeming indecorum that keeps their own faulty conduct in countenance.

The world judges only from appearances. By preserving these, the guilty obscure the view of their delinquencies; and become, consequently, less pernicious than if they exhibited reckless and unveiled vice. But those who, to vice, add the shamelessness of its exhibition, have to answer, not only for their own sins, but for the corruption their example promotes.

How many women, free from a thought of crime, have, through a carelessness as to preserving appearances, compromised their

reputations, and dragged on a long life of humiliation, with no other consolation but that of knowing, that to imprudence, and not guilt, they owe their sufferings!

You, my dearest Augusta, will not peruse with impatience this long homily, but accept it as a proof of the affectionate interest of your true friend,

MARY DELAWARD.

THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD TO THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE.

I AM happy to be able to tell you, my dear Augusta, that your excellent father and mother are in perfect health; and that our endeavours to console them for the loss of your society have not been totally unsuccessful. They can

now revert to your absence with less sorrow, though not with less affection ; and this is something gained. We have induced them to prolong their stay with us, which, I trust, will be beneficial to their spirits, as well as to those of my dear father, who much enjoys the presence of such old and valued friends. Being anxious to make you acquainted with some of the persons whose society has rendered London agreeable to me, I have written to them to call on you; the period of my returning to town being too uncertain to admit of my waiting to present them to you personally.

I hope you will cultivate more than a mere visiting acquaintance with them ; for they are of that portion of our aristocracy and gentry whose unsullied reputations, and irreproachable lives, present a barrier against that censure on our order which the indecorum and levity of some of its stray branches have drawn upon it.

They nobly uphold the fame and honour once so generally and so justly decreed to British women, before, at the mandate of fashion, some of them had learned to disregard that external propriety which should ever accompany virtue.

The Duchess of Fitzwalter you will find a most estimable person, and as agreeable as she is amiable, although the *clique* who have assumed the supremacy of fashion, vote her, and her circle, dull and *ennuyeuse ;* but, with them, decorum is only another name for dulness. Lady Erpingham is also a charming person ; and Mrs. Algernon Wentworth is as unaffected and unspoilt as if she were neither a beauty nor a wit. I have especially named these three ladies to you, as being my most intimate friends; but the others to whom I have written to request that they will call on you, are not less amiable.

Much of your happiness, as well as your position and estimation in society, dear Augusta, will depend on the associations you form, and the friendships you cultivate. In the houses of the ladies I have named, you will find men of merit and high attainments, and women of unpretending talents, undoubted sense, and unsuspected purity.

They do not, it is true, give names to caps or bonnets; they are not patronesses of Almack's, nor frequenters of the Zoological Gardens on the Sabbath-day; and, to sum up all, they are *not* leaders of fashion,—a distinction never sought by the wise, and only valued by the foolish. The Duchess of Fitzwalter being many years your senior, and having a knowledge of life, rarely acquired except at the expense of some of those fine qualities peculiar to youth, all of which she has preserved,—her society and experience will be highly advantageous to you,

in enabling you to form a just estimate of those around you. It will be even more beneficial to you than that of a person of more advanced years, whose sombre view of the world is often no less erroneous than is the bright one of youth: for youth resembles a Claude Lorraine glass, which imparts to all objects its own beautiful tint; but age too often resembles a magnifying lens of an ungracious hue, which only renders every defect more conspicuous, and more forbidding. I would have you view the world through neither medium; but through the clear mirror presented to you by the experience of this excellent woman—a mirror undimmed by prejudice, and unsullied by ill-nature.

There is an evil against which I would guard you, dear Augusta, because it is one fraught with danger, but into which, from inexperience of the world, too many young married women fall: I allude to the habit

of receiving male visitors of a morning; a habit which engenders a degree of familiarity that, however innocent, I hold to be incompatible with the dignity of a matron.

The woman who permits her boudoir or drawing-room to be made the daily lounge of men, soon loses that consideration, even among them, which every honourable woman ought to inspire. Her *salon* becomes the focus of gossiping; scandal creeps in; party politics are soon intruded; the sanctity and privacy of home are violated; and the modest reserve, which is one of the most beautiful distinctions of the female character, is replaced by a freedom of manner as unbecoming as it is reprehensible. But I have not yet enumerated all the evils of this habit, so generally adopted at present; I have only stated the bad effect likely to accrue to the woman's manners who permits it. Let me now draw your attention to the

injury it is almost certain to inflict on her reputation.

The cabriolet or saddle-horses of a man of fashion, seen repeatedly at the door of a lady, are sure to elicit disagreeable animadversions from those, perhaps, totally unacquainted with her. These observations are related to others, generally with added comments, and not unfrequently with misrepresentations; reports get into circulation, and scandal becomes busy with her fame, which is too often sullied before an evil thought has entered her mind.

When once such reports have been promulgated, all her actions are misinterpreted; every appearance of gaiety or levity is tortured into a proof of guilt; and the most innocent woman, whose conduct is thus prejudged from the semblance of impropriety which her own imprudence has furnished, could hardly fail to be ultimately condemned.

Is not this a heavy penalty to pay for the pleasure, if pleasure it may be called, of enduring the tediousness of a few idle men some twice or thrice a-week, during those hours which they know not how otherwise to occupy? They are aware of the evil consequences such visits will entail on her who permits them, for they daily hear the scandalous comments that similar conduct excites; but *n'importe:* as long as they are bantered on their supposed good fortune at their clubs, or paragraphed in the newspapers, they are satisfied, though it is at the expense of the reputation of an innocent woman.

Lord Delaward has initiated me into all the mysteries of society, which had seemed unfathomable to my own previous inexperience. He is my Mentor, who points out the dangers of which only a skilful pilot can steer clear; and I furnish you, my dear Augusta, with a few extracts from my newly-acquired knowledge.

Your last letter gave me great pain, a spirit of sadness pervaded it that must not be indulged. Indeed, you are unjust to Lord Annandale in expecting from him precisely those qualities in which he is deficient, and in not appreciating those that he really possesses. If he be neither sentimental nor domestic, he is good-tempered and kind-hearted; and you may, by treating him with affection, render him more estimable. Do not, while cherishing his child, harden your feelings against its father; and remember that, though a too long and constant association with the artificial circle in which he has lived may have blunted his sensibility, you may again restore its natural tone by letting him perceive that you are interested in the change.

Adieu, my dear Augusta, and ever believe me your most affectionate friend,

MARY DELAWARD.

THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE TO THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD.

The contents of your former letter* pained me inexpressibly, my dearest Mary; and yet, even before I gave Caroline Montressor an opportunity of refuting the imputation cast upon her honour, I felt persuaded that the charge was wholly unfounded. I was more than half disposed to let her remain in ignorance of the aspersion; but, on reflection, I thought it right to acquaint her with it, that she might justify her reputation to those who, unlike me, might be inclined to repose some portion of belief on the calumny.

How painful was it to my friendship to

* This refers to Lady Delaward's Letter, Vol. I. page 194, in which the charge against Miss Montressor's honour is made, but which Lady Annandale did not receive for some time after.

inflict this wound on her! Never did I perform a duty with more reluctance; and I endeavoured to discharge it with as much delicacy as possible. She was greatly shocked; and evinced so much proper feeling on the occasion, that she convinced me, and would, I am sure, have satisfied you, of her innocence.

Levity, and a certain freedom in conversation, peculiar to women who aspire to the reputation of a *bel esprit*, are her only sins. They are venial ones, and should not be visited with undue severity. The tale that reached you originated in the malice of a disappointed suitor of Caroline's, the Chevalier de Carency, a dissolute young man, who became enamoured of her while she was yet little more than a child. Enraged at her rejection of him, he vowed to be revenged; and the story he invented and related to Lord Warrenborough is the result.

I am convinced that you, my dear Mary, will rejoice at being assured of the innocence of my friend, as I know the generosity of your nature: for my own part, I experience an increased attachment to her, now that I know the injustice to which she has been subjected; an injustice doubly painful to the feelings, as being exercised to an orphan, without a single male relative to defend or to avenge her. How dreadful it is to reflect that men can exist capable of the baseness of defaming the virtue they could not overcome, and ought, consequently, to defend! Pray, inform Lord Delaward of Caroline's innocence; for I would not have one, to whose good opinion I attach so much importance, continue in error with regard to my poor friend.

My dear boy continues to thrive apace, and seems every day to grow more fond of me. He is a charming child, and you would be delighted with him, he is so good-tempered and

engaging. Lord Nottingham is very partial to him, and St. Aubyn already knows him quite well, goes to him gladly, and sits on his knee. I wish I could say that Lord Annandale evinced an equal fondness; but this is far from being the case, for he betrays an indifference towards him that quite shocks and displeases me. The poor dear little fellow seems conscious of his father's want of affection, and instinctively, as it were, shrinks from him when he approaches.

The Duchess of Fitzwalter has been here, and I like the little I have seen of her extremely, notwithstanding that she appeared under disadvantageous circumstances; for when she called, the Comtesse Hohenlinden, who is evidently no favourite with her, was here, and displayed a levity, and, I may add, an indecorum, in her conversation and manner, that must have prejudiced the duchess, not only against her, but also against me, for suffering

it. I felt that a disagreeable impression was made on your friend's mind, but I had no means of removing it; for any verbal reproof of mine would have been as little heeded as are the tacit ones which I have frequently given to this incorrigible comtesse.

Lord Annandale, when informed of the visit of the Duchess of Fitzwalter, signified his desire that I should avoid all intimacy with her, or "her coterie," as he termed the persons who are precisely those whom I should prefer; and are, in fact, the very ladies with whom you most wished me to cultivate an intercourse. He observed, that the duchess was peculiarly repugnant to his taste; and, by her formality and *hauteur*, spread a gloom wherever she appeared. He animadverted, in terms fraught with satire and ridicule, on the line of demarcation the duchess and her friends had drawn around their circle; the *cordon sani-*

taire, as he banteringly styled it, that was to exclude the contagion of gaiety and wit.

It is plain to me that the Comtesse Hohenlinden, piqued by the cold reception she meets with among the ladies in question, has sought to prejudice Lord Annandale against them, and has but too well succeeded. The women who frequent Annandale House are remarkable for an indescribable tone, a strange mixture of levity and *fierté*, as disagreeable as it is incongruous. They are all the copyists of the Comtesse Hohenlinden, but less good-humoured; and there is not one amongst them who has excited an interest in my mind, or with whom I should wish to form a friendship.

Ah! how right were you, dearest Mary, when you prophesied that London and its pleasures would disappoint my expectations! This perpetual round of amusement, without one day of privacy or repose, fatigues me

mentally and bodily. It is like a brilliant comedy where the curtain never drops, and where both actors and audience are alike wearied. Often do I sigh for the shades of Vernon Hall, with its tranquil enjoyments, allowing one to entertain a consciousness of one's own identity; while here, one is literally rendered incapable of self-recognition, or even self-communion: thought is banished by continuous and frivolous dissipation, and the affections seem useless in an atmosphere where there is no time permitted for their exercise.

When, a few days ago, I expressed a wish that my dear father and mother would come to London, Lord Annandale asked me how it would be possible to find sufficient time to satisfy them, old people being, as he rudely said, always *exigeant*.

How little he knows them! I answered, that no engagements could have half such

temptations for me as the society of those I so dearly love.

"But you have duties, Augusta," he said, "that must be fulfilled."

"What duties," demanded I, "can preclude the sacred one to our parents?"

He positively laughed, and *I* felt angry—there is something so peculiarly offensive, at least to my feelings, in hearing the best, the most holy sentiments in our nature, thus made a subject of mockery.

Seeing I was hurt, he apologised, but added,—

"You owe, also, duties to society, my dear Augusta, that must not be neglected. You are expected to appear at the houses of certain note, and to receive in your own all the persons of distinction. Your position, as *my* wife,"—and he looked as if he considered this my sole claim to distinction,—"demands this;

and such engagements, during the London season, are too numerous to admit of devoting any time to others. In the autumn, or during the winter, if we do not go abroad, you can give up a week or two to your father and mother at Vernon Hall; though, I venture to prophesy, you would now find a *séjour* there, even of that brief duration, insupportably dull."

I asserted that, on the contrary, I should like it above all things; when he shrugged his shoulders, looked incredulous, and told me, it gave him pain to see me growing sentimental and romantic, instead of becoming a woman of the world.

And this, Mary, is the man, to marry whom I wrung a reluctant consent from my dear, dear father and mother! There is insupportable bitterness in the reflection!

I foresee that I shall find Lord Annandale little disposed to consult the wishes of my

family, or my own, in arranging that we should see as much of each other as possible. Could I have anticipated this, no power would have induced me to marry him, even though he had possessed my whole heart. But I am rightly rewarded for bestowing my hand on one of whom I knew nothing, except that he was gay and brilliant — two advantages which often temporarily conceal the absence of those solid qualities on which domestic happiness depends. *He* is not changed since I made this fatal, this rash engagement; the change is in *me*, who, seeing the worthlessness of those pleasures he so glowingly described to tempt me,—pleasures now deprived of the glittering veil that disguised their defects,—turn, with disappointment, from the temptation and the tempter.

Forgive these murmurs, dear Mary, from

Your affectionate friend,

AUGUSTA ANNANDALE.

FROM MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

Your story has interested me exceedingly, *ma chère* Delphine. I do remember having seen Madame de St. Armand, and was struck with her beauty. I have praised you before, but I now tell you again, that the tale is so artistically recounted, that it might be entitled to a place in one of the fashionable annuals here, to which lords and ladies contribute. Have I your permission to send it, merely changing the names? so that you may have the satisfaction of seeing it beautifully printed, gold-edged, and bound in a gorgeous cover, with some pretty face to illustrate it.

But, to be serious — and this melancholy story is sufficient to make one so — it is a very distressing event; and the ladies who con-

cocted the plot cannot feel otherwise than shocked at its results. *Entre nous*, I do believe, that there is no creature under heaven more wholly heartless, or more disposed to be mischievous, than a fine lady; and the fact of the plot against the unoffending St. Armands goes far to prove the justice of this assertion. Do not imagine that I confound a gentlewoman with a fine lady, in this censure. No; according to my view of the subject, a fine lady is rarely a gentlewoman, and a gentlewoman would not often condescend to be a fine lady.

Formerly, the terms "fine lady," and "fine gentleman," were applied to women and men peculiarly well-bred, and of remarkably polished manners: now, they are employed to designate some individuals remarkable for the affectation of fastidiousness, and the exemplification of folly, the assumption of *bon ton*, and the personification of vulgarity; the pretensions to

ultra-refinement being, in my opinion, the most infallible symptoms of incurable coarseness of mind. The fine lady in France is, however, free from these assumptions. She is merely a vain and giddy woman, living only for amusement, capable of any folly, and, sometimes (as in the case of the St. Armands,) of any crime, to accelerate her plans in the pursuit of it.

I have been much pained and mortified, *chère* Delphine, by finding that my unfortunate entanglement with that vile and unworthy wretch, de Carency, has reached Lady Annandale, who, with the frankness peculiar to her nature, told me the fact. I hardly knew whether she or I felt the more pain or shame at the disclosure, softened, as it was, by her mode of detailing it. She is not, like me, schooled in deception, — that art which the world renders necessary, — and possesses not

the power of concealing all external symptoms of those emotions to which the heart is a prey, even while tortured by them. This fair and pure creature blushed and wept while she repeated the tale that had been communicated to her as a warning against me; while I, writhing beneath the torture of humiliation at its truth, and shame at the detection, quelled my feelings sufficiently to exhibit only a proper degree of indignation at what I termed the falsehood of the base accusation.

The wretch to whom I owe this indignity revealed the fatal truth to some English lord, shortly after his flight from Florence, without the precaution of concealing my name. He even related your story, as well as mine. Would to God I had never seen this unequalled miscreant!

Lady Annandale thought it her duty, as my friend, to repeat to me the statement; and never can I forget the delicacy, the sensibility, with

which she communicated it. I made, as I have said a desperate, but, *grace à mes nerfs*, successful effort to acquire self-control, seeing that my position in society, my very fate, depended on my convincing her that I am a victim to calumny. I stated that this dissolute man had proposed to marry me while I was yet little more than a child; that, maddened by my rejection of his suit, he had invented this atrocious falsehood; and that, imagining you to have prepossessed me against him, he had also vilified you.

This explanation, with a few fervent declarations of horror at the infamous charge, and agony at the idea of any human being crediting, or even hearing it, drew from this warm-hearted and noble-minded woman a flood of tears of the softest pity, and protestations of eternal constancy and friendship.

I was subdued by her generous sympathy, and could not restrain the emotions it excited.

Yes, Delphine, there are moments when my better nature seems to triumph over the worldliness that has so long hardened it, and I again feel susceptible of the gentle affections that are, I begin to think, indigenous in woman's heart.

I told Augusta that, rather than expose her to the censure of those who could believe me guilty, I would immediately return to the abode of my aunt; but she would not hear of such a measure. She insisted on my remaining the whole season with her; and, though always kind, now redoubled her affectionate attention to me. I mentioned something about the possibility of Lord Annandale's hearing the tale in question; but she stopped me by saying, that it was quite unlikely he should, for that the friend who had thought it necessary to communicate it to her would never name it to any one else.

This friend is, I am persuaded, Lady Delaward; and her knowledge of my disgrace ac-

counts for her invariable coldness and *hauteur* towards me. How dreadful it is, *chère* Delphine, to have to blush before a proud and stern woman, who has heard of one's guilt, and who believes it! My asseverations of innocence would have fallen on an incredulous ear, had they been addressed to Lady Delaward; but never should they have been addressed to *her*. No, forbid it, pride! forbid it, shame! I would rather hide me in some distant region, where never human sympathy could reach me, than meet the reproachful glance of a cold-hearted prude, after having weakly and vainly attempted to mollify her proud and callous nature, by a voluntary and abject confession of my crime and remorse. With such beings I should be for ever indomitable, stern, and reckless, with scorn and mockery on my lips; while, with Augusta, weeping and blushing at being compelled to repeat an accusation of me,

I feel every harsh emotion subdued, and am ready to throw myself at her feet, avow my errors, and implore her to remodel, correct, and guide me. Such is the influence her softness and generous pity exert over my stubborn heart.

Why did I urge this fair creature to wed one so wholly unworthy of her as is Lord Annandale, and so totally incapable of appreciating her? Lord Nottingham is precisely the sort of man with whom she would have been happy, as all I see of both of them convinces me. They would have met — would, I am sure, have loved — and, in all human probability, have married, and enjoyed the felicity they deserve, but for me. Her conduct on the late trying occasion, makes me regret more than ever my fatal interference. I am interrupted, so must leave you.

Chère amie, toujours votre

CAROLINE.

THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD TO THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE.

Do not consider me ill-natured or obstinate when I confess to you, my dear Augusta, that my doubts relative to Miss Montressor's purity are still unremoved. *Her* assertion, in her own case, is surely insufficient proof of her innocence, to any but a too partial friend. Are not the charges against her borne out by the extraordinary levity and indecorum of her manners? I acknowledge that all I have seen of her but too well disposes me to lend credence to what I have heard; and, coupling the tale of the Chevalier de Carency with the unfeminine freedom of her opinions, one appears to me as an evidence of the other. If I were less deeply, warmly interested in your

welfare, I might be less severely disposed towards this lady: but when I reflect that she is an inmate beneath your roof, your daily associate — nay, more, your friend,—I examine, with rigid eyes, her claims to such distinction; and, finding them so defective, would fain preserve you from contact with one whom I deem most unworthy. I fear my pertinacious adherence to the evil opinion I entertain of her will displease you, but I cannot vanquish it; and again I entreat you to guard against her influence.

I lament that Lord Annandale wishes you to avoid an acquaintance with the friends I was so desirous you should know. I dare say you have judged rightly in imagining his prejudices to proceed from the pique of the Comtesse Hohenlinden. Nothing serves more to render a person averse from *good* company than the habit of associating with *bad;* and,

in the circle in which Lord Annandale has moved, all who are moral and decorous are pronounced to be dull. There is policy in this opinion; for, as the really good would not countenance the *clique* to which I refer, they proclaim their dislike of what they know they cannot attain. Notwithstanding I entirely disapprove Lord Annandale's selection of associates for you, still let me advise you not to irritate him or them by any harsh censures. Patience is a woman's best armour; and gentleness, her only safe weapon. These may not have an *immediate*, but, I believe, they generally have a *sure* effect; and, therefore, I entreat you to use them always. A prudent woman will seek, not so much to *convict* her husband of error as to wean him from it; for men rarely pardon any exhibition of intellectual superiority in their wives, while they are soothed and gratified by meekness and affection.

You are young, lovely, and highly gifted; Lord Annandale greatly admires you: why not convert this admiration into a sentiment more durable, more valuable, which would secure for you an influence over him most advantageous to his interests, and to your own? Coldness and indifference never enabled a woman to gain an empire over a husband's heart; and yet these are, even from your own confession, but too visible in your demeanour towards him. Can you, then, wonder that he appears careless of your wishes, or callous to your reasoning? Remember, that Lord Annandale has been a spoiled child of fortnne—indulged and flattered to satiety. Truth has rarely reached him, and the love of hearing it is like the partiality for olives, an acquired taste. The friend who administers this unpalatable medicine should render it less nauseous, by affectionate kindness; so that its bitterness, like the physic

given to children, may be almost merged in the accompanying sweets. Do not abandon yourself to the dispiriting and erroneous belief that yours is an incurable lot; for it is only a persistance in thus thinking that can render it so. Duties discharged, domestic affections cultivated, and the consciousness of having no subject for self-reproach, preclude unhappiness; though they may not bestow that vivid, but evanescent feeling, which the young and romantic but too often mistake for it.

Believe me, my dear Augusta,

Your most affectionate friend,

MARY DELAWARD.

THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE TO THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD.

You give me good counsel, dearest Mary; would to heaven that I had sufficient resolution to follow it! But I am a wayward creature, and cannot feign a semblance of affection when I do not entertain the sentiment. It would be wiser, and more amiable, to endeavour to win Lord Annandale to purer, better, feelings and pursuits,—even though, as I strongly suspect, the attempt would be utterly unavailing,—than to dwell on his defects, as I am prone to do: but when was I wise or amiable? Alas! never the first, and rarely, if ever, the second. You will reproach me if I dwell on this painful theme; I will, therefore, dismiss it, and adopt an agreeable one.

The only amusements I enjoy in London are the theatres, and the opera. One of the divine

Shakspeare's tragedies, with Macready to personate the chief character, can always charm me; and at such representations I forget my chagrin and myself. I have always had, as you know, an inordinate passion for music; but it has greatly increased since I have been accustomed to listen to the heart-stirring voice of the inspired Malibran, or the dulcet tones of la Grisi.

The first inimitable songstress draws me continually to Drury Lane, where she is engaged; and it seems to me, that I listen with increased delight to her the more I become acquainted with the power and pathos of her voice. The low notes of it produce an effect on me that no others ever did. The sound appears to emanate from a soul thrilling with sublime emotions; and its deep harmony causes mine to vibrate. There is something mysterious, something magical, in its influence on me. It haunts me for many succeeding

hours; and seems to me as if it arose from an inspired, passionate, and despairing heart, in an intensely profound consciousness of the insufficiency of mortal powers to satisfy the aspirations of an immortal spirit to a release from its earthly trammels, and to the fulfilment of a wider and nobler destiny.

I have avoided becoming personally acquainted with Malibran, because, I am told, she is the most animated and gay person imaginable, giving utterance to the liveliest sallies, and most *naïve* observations. For this peculiarity, which draws a flattering homage around her, I shun her society; because I would not have the associations with which she is mingled in my mind, disturbed by a light word or heartless jest from lips that seem to me only formed for the creation of the most sublime sounds. Those deep eyes of hers, too, have a profound melancholy, even in their flashing lustre; and I have never so perfect a sympathy with my

compatriots, as when I hear those divine notes of hers followed by the plaudits of hundreds, too enthusiastically expressed to leave a doubt of the sincerity of the heartfelt admiration that excites them.

Malibran, in my opinion, seems to inspire her audience : they are no longer a vast crowd assembled to be amused ; no, they assume a much more imposing aspect. They are carried away by passionate emotion, by generous impulses, and they feel within themselves capabilities, of the existence of which they were previously ignorant. She ceases to be a mere singer, or paid actress, in their eyes ; she becomes an inspired sybil that reveals to them gleams of a purer, brighter world, which they had forgotten, but to which her divine tones summon them to return.

Grisi's voice, charming as it is, produces no such effect on me ; it is round, liquid,

limpid, and perfectly harmonious, always creating pleasurable emotions, but rarely sublime ones. It never awakens an echo in my heart — never lifts my thoughts from earth; but, like the music of birds, it makes the earth more delightful, and the ear loves to drink in its dulcet tones. The voice of Malibran affects me as does sacred music; and I should dislike hearing it employed in singing light airs, as much as I should hearing a cathedral organ playing a waltz or contre-danse.

Lablache's is also a voice that has great charms for me. It comes pealing forth, grand and powerful as a choir in some lofty temple; while Rubini's always reminds me of the plaintive, never to be forgotten chant of the *Miserere* in the Sixtine chapel at Rome, which, though heard while I was yet only a child, I remember as distinctly as if it had been but yesterday.

Who could support the effect of music to which we had last listened in the society of one beloved, if death had snatched for ever from us that object? I, who have, thank Heaven! never known the most bitter of all pangs, that of mourning for a dear friend, yet cannot hear serious music without feeling a profound, but sweet melancholy, that brings unbidden tears to my eyes, and thoughts of another world to my mind. To see people around me smiling, or conversing, while a grave harmony is holding communion with my spirit, seems little short of profanation; and I could never select such soulless beings for my friends.

You, dear Mary, will not smile at my enthusiastic admiration for music, when I tell you, that never is a sense of religion so strongly impressed on me as when I am listening to it. Yet, I fear, you will say, that religion ought not to be a matter of feeling, but a fixed and

immutable principle, over which external sights or sounds should have no influence, or, at all events, no control. But I was ever a creature of impulses and instincts, one of the strongest of which is my affection for you — an affection that has never known a diminution in the heart of your AUGUSTA.

FROM LORD VERNON TO THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE.

Vernon Hall.

MY DEAREST CHILD. — We are returned to our home, and miss you so much that I have recourse to writing to you, in order to cheat myself into the belief that I am, as in past happy times, talking to my own Gusty. You must often repeat the assurances of your happiness, my blessed child, to console us for the loss of ours, which departed with you. Yet

I would not have you perfectly happy, Gusty, for I wish that you should feel the want of your mother, who so dearly loves you ; and of your old fond father, too, who so unwisely spoiled you, by his incapability of denying you any thing, that, at length, you, knowing his weakness, asked him to consent to your abandonment of him ; when he, silly, doting man that he was, gave up his only joy, his only comfort.

Ah! Gusty, you should not have left us so soon. Three years hence would have been quite time enough for you to have married. In that period, we might have reasoned ourselves into living without you—you might have grown less fond, less engaging, less dear to us. But no, that never could have been ; the longer you might have remained with us, the less disposed should we have been to have parted from you!

This place is totally changed. The trees look dark and gloomy, the lawns cheerless, the lakes still and sullen; and the birds seem to me to sing less gaily this year than I ever remember. Your mother, when I made this remark to her, said the change was in us, and not in the objects around. Perhaps she is right, my Gusty; yet I do love to fancy, that all nature is influenced by your absence — but this is the folly of an old doting father.

I look after your flower-garden myself: every flower you loved seems to me to be a part of yourself; and I cherish them, as those fair and fragile things were never before cherished. Wise people would tell me, that all this is very silly and foolish; and so, I dare say, it is: but I cannot repress the feeling, any more than I can the disclosure of it to you, my own darling; an impulse that I have always indulged, even at the time when you were a little

thing, and used to sit in my lap, and kiss my cheek, and run your fingers through my gray locks. Do you remember those happy days?

Your horse quite provoked me to-day. Would you believe it, the ungrateful animal went neighing, prancing, and galloping, through the paddock, in as great gaiety as if his mistress had been here? He made me angry; but I consoled myself by thinking that you would, at no remote period, I hope, repay him for his ingratitude by a daily, and long gallop over the downs.

I had intended not to have said a word about these things in my letter, but, somehow or other, they have all slipped out. But do not be uneasy at what I have told you, dearest Gusty — only never forget us. Let us have the consolation of knowing, that you think of us, miss us, and long for us, and we shall be satisfied, until you are again in our arms.

Lady Delaward behaved to us with a kindness and affection never to be forgotten; her lord, also, left nothing undone to cheer our spirits, but Lord Nottingham's considerate attention, if possible, surpassed theirs. He was so gentle, so steady, never in a hurry, as most young men always are; never betraying symptoms of impatience at hearing long stories from old people. Why, would you believe it, Gusty, he not only let your mother and I tell him every anecdote about your childhood, — and you know we have a precious long collection, — but he continually, spontaneously, asked us fresh questions? Yes, he is indeed a most amiable man, and delightful companion. What a husband he will make! How I wish that you —— I forgot what I was going to write, my child; but my memory, never of the best, begins to fail me of late.

Thank Lord Nottingham for all his affec-

tionate kindness to us. Ah, Gusty, why have you left us?

Your letters do not satisfy us; they do not contain those outburstings of happiness that we looked for, to console us for your absence. How is this, my child? Your mother says, that it proceeds from a delicacy on your part, of not appearing *too* happy away from us. And now I remember it, my Gusty, I have often and often wondered why you seemed so very cold to Lord Annandale, just at the last. Was it that you found, when the time of parting drew near, that you loved us better than you had fancied, and could not reconcile your mind to leaving your poor old doting father and mother? Yes! it must have been this thought that caused your sadness. Bless you for it, a thousand times, my heart's darling! I at once suspected this; and, to save you from the pain of separation, I offered Lord Annan-

dale to go up to London at once; but he, to say the truth, opposed it so much that our pride took the alarm, though often, since, we have wondered why he should have rejected our proposal. Your mother thinks that it was because he wished to have you all to himself, in order to accustom you to live without us. Perhaps it was so. I know not how you, my child, have learned the lesson, but I feel that we have not acquired it.

I promised, when I began this letter, to leave half the paper for your mother; yet I find I have nearly filled it all, without having said half what my heart dictates to you. Bless you, my precious child, my own Gusty! prays your fond father,

VERNON.

FROM THE COUNTESS OF VERNON TO THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE.

Your father has told you, my most beloved Augusta, how sadly we miss you. I try to comfort him, by the prospect of our soon meeting; but my efforts have not been successful. I forgot my own regrets, in endeavouring to sooth his; yet I, too, my precious child, miss your sweet and joyous face every hour, as we miss the sun when his bright beams no longer cheer us. I find myself continually in your room, once so gay, and now so desolate. Your bed, with the pillow on which, from infancy, your dear head has rested — how sad does it make me to look on it now! Your writing-table, your tambour-frame, your harp and piano, all, all remind me that you, the dear presiding spirit which animated them, are far away.

Why is not Lord Annandale a lover of the country, like Lords Delaward and Nottingham? We should then see more of you, and might get reconciled to this separation; but, as it is, it has fallen heavily upon us. I do not neglect your poor pensioners, and I feel an increase of good-will towards all our household from observing how much they sympathise with us in our regret for you. Heaven guard and bless my precious child, prays her fondly attached mother,

FRANCES AUGUSTA VERNON.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

MA CHÈRE DELPHINE,—I was fearful that I should never come in contact with any of the women here most remarkable for their high

moral character, and for a strict decorum of manner peculiar to the *noblesse* of this country before a clumsy imitation and gross exaggeration of continental manners had been adopted. Some, however, of these ladies have been to call on Lady Annandale; and have impressed me with a respect for them, if not with any warmer sentiment. One, the Duchess of Fitzwalter, was announced the other day, when *notre amie la* Comtesse Hohenlinden was reclining in the *bergère,* in the boudoir of Augusta, exhibiting her pretty feet and well-turned ankles to two of her attending *beaux*, by placing them in a more elevated posture than modesty sanctions.

This freedom of manner, this *abandon* and *laissez aller*, so peculiar to *notre frau graf'inn*, always brings a blush to the cheek of Augusta; who sits constrained and silent, to the no small amusement of the *comtesse*, who delights in

what she calls shocking her English prudery. I could perceive, by the increased gravity of the Duchess of Fitzwalter's demeanour, that she was more surprised than gratified by finding *notre amie la comtesse* established here so, apparently, at her ease; and I positively saw her cheek grow red as her eyes fell on the exposed ankles so ostentatiously displayed on the *tabouret*.

Notre comtesse, who has discovered that she is in *très mauvaise odeur* with the circle in which the Duchess of Fitzwalter lives, determined, with that recklessness which is one of her distinguishing characteristics, to shock still more the decorum of that lady. We had been conversing on the cholera, and the alarming ravages it is making, previously to the duchess' entrance, and the *comtesse* resumed the subject by saying,—

" I hope the cholera will increase, for only

fancy how delightful it would be to become at once emancipated from all the absurd conventional restraints of etiquette, and what you, *mesdames*, call decorum! How pleasant it would be to lead a life like that so agreeably described by Boccacio, as having been passed by him and his friends during the *peste* at Florence! Ever since I read it, I have longed to find myself in a similar position."

The Duchess of Fitzwalter absolutely crimsoned, and Augusta became agitated with shame and indignation; while *notre amie* looked archly at her *beaux*, and triumphantly at me, directing our attention to the obvious discomposure of our hostess and her visitor; who, probably, will not seek to cultivate Augusta's acquaintance after this *echantillon* of the society she keeps, for there was a proud reserve in her demeanour, as she withdrew, that indicated some such determination.

The coldness of Augusta's manner towards the *comtesse* irritates the temper, but does not check the levity and coarseness, of that lady, who every where represents her as being *maussade, bête, et stupide.* From all these imputed defects, however, Augusta is far removed; but the position in which she is placed is one so peculiar and embarrassing, that it throws a constraint over the natural vivacity and gracefulness of her manners, and induces the adoption of a reserve and *hauteur* foreign to her disposition.

The extreme youth of Lady Annandale, and her total inexperience of fashionable society, have enabled her lord to usurp the privilege usually granted to all wives—that of selecting their female acquaintance. He encourages the frequent visits of those whose general tone of conversation is the most uncongenial to her taste; and, in truth, I must add, the least

calculated to be advantageous to her morals. Augusta, having no power of excluding such unwelcome guests, entrenches herself in a proud reserve, which, instead of banishing them from her house, produces no other effect than that of unmitigated dislike to her whom they affect to consider and treat as a mere cipher, a spoiled and capricious child, whom, for the sake of her husband, they tolerate.

Her fondness for Lord Annandale's boy they ridicule as the *entichement* of a girl for a new plaything; and her assumption of the gravity and reserve becoming the matronly character, as a whim of the moment. They, none of them, comprehend her: how should they—beholding her only through the false medium of their prejudices, and of their offended vanity? But I, who have seen her in her happy home, the idol of her parents and the friends of her youth, know how warm, how affectionate is

her nature; and often, in spite of my stoicism, pity her in her present uncongenial position, in which she reminds me of some beautiful flower, transplanted from its native clime, to droop and fade in a less genial atmosphere.

One of your countrywomen, *chère* Delphine, even though only emancipated from her convent or *pension* a week before her marriage, would quickly assume, and pertinaciously retain, the privileges of a *maîtresse de maison*. *Notre comtesse* and her *clique* would soon find themselves excluded from the *salon d'une Française nouvellement mariée*, if they were not suited to her taste, even though they were the dear friends of her husband; nay, perhaps, this circumstance would, in her mind, be a *raison de plus* for their exclusion.

There is, I observe, a natural tendency to subordination in young Englishwomen, which, had their husbands perception enough to dis-

cover and take advantage of, might save much domestic annoyance. But Englishmen are, for the most part, so totally devoid of tact, and so wholly absorbed in their selfishness, that they seldom adopt a system calculated to give them more than a temporary empire over the minds of their wives, and still more seldom do they use that empire wisely.

Adieu, belle et bonne! Croyez toujours à l'amitié de votre CAROLINE

THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM TO EDWARD MORDAUNT, ESQ.

MY DEAR MORDAUNT,—I have read the publication to which you referred me;* though,

* The letters of Mr. Mordaunt, having little connexion with the conduct of the story, do not appear.

Heaven knows, I never felt less disposed to read, or less capable of judging a grave production, than at present. I agree with you in pronouncing the criticism it contains to be partial and unjust, and think I can guess the writer. There is no surer criterion for judging of a man than by his criticisms. Benevolence is almost always allied to mental superiority, as is malevolence to that species of smartness termed literary acumen, which enables its possessor to detect and exaggerate the faults of a work, while he remains totally insensible to its merits.

A critic gifted with superior mental powers will be more inclined to lenity than severity, because he is above envy; but one of limited intelligence will ever be prone to depreciate what he cannot equal. Such is the writer of the review in question, who, having failed as an author, avenges his own want of literary

success on his more fortunate contemporaries, reminding one of the truth of the old rhymer's lines,—

> "Authors turn critics when of fame they're foiled,
> As wine to vinegar oft turns when spoiled."

You observed, I am sure, the great importance he attaches to style, which he seems to think more important than matter. Now, I am of opinion, that to pay more attention to the style of an author than to his thoughts, is like regarding a woman for her dress more than for her person. Style, like dress, should be appropriate, and not detract attention from what it was meant to adorn.

You say that you felt disappointed in ——; that he is less brilliant than his works prepared you to expect to find him. This remark I have heard applied to every literary man of our day; with what justice I will not stop to inquire.

Has it never occurred to you why it is that we hear so many persons express the disappointment generally felt in the society of authors whose works have afforded them the greatest pleasure? Is it not, that in the works we perused the secret thoughts, the elevated aspirations poured forth in solitude, and addressed to the *minds*, and not to the *ears*, of men? How much more freely can a writer give forth his sentiments to the public, than to his most intimate friends! In perusing a work, we make acquaintance at once with the mind of its creator, free from the constraint imposed by conventional ceremony. We are not influenced by his countenance or manner; by the sound of his voice, or the tie of his cravat; all of which frivolous accessories bias our judgment of him, more or less, however much we may disclaim the humiliating imputation. His works admit us to a familiarity

with his secret thoughts; we become gratified by finding in ourselves a sympathy with his feelings; and we quit his productions with self-complacency, because delighted by the discovery of the elevated sentiments they have awakened in us.

We encounter the man who has conferred upon us these benefits: we are surprised and disappointed at finding that he gives us only the ordinary topics of the day; and even those, perhaps, are delivered with the reserve which the conventions of society impose, or with the flippancy that the exhilaration of gay companionship occasionally produces.

His appearance, manner, or the tone of his voice, is not precisely what we expected; for people always form an idea of an author, and are apt to be displeased when he is found to be dissimilar to it. The cut of his coat, fashion of his waistcoat, tie of his cravat, or

colour of his gloves, may, as I before said, give offence, and direct against his person the raillery of those who, perhaps, have most loudly praised his works.

Absurd as these remarks may appear, they are, nevertheless, true. Often have I known such unworthy trifles as some of these I have described produce dislike, nay, injustice. An author comes into society, often tired and jaded from writing, to discharge some duty imposed by politeness; or simply to unbend his mind, its force and depth being reserved solely for his study. In his works is seen the profound, but clear stream of his unbroken thoughts; but in society an occasional ripple only is perceived, that but faintly indicates the vigour, the majesty, of the under-current. The conversation of even the most distinguished writer is ever, more or less, influenced by the persons around him; and, like the

chameleon, it too often takes the hue of the nearest object. He adopts, perhaps, this particular tone, not for the purpose of displaying his own thoughts, for they attain publicity through the channel of his writings, but in the idea of suiting the moral calibre and temper of the often uncongenial circle in which he finds himself. Hence the disappointment experienced by those who, having known the author only by his works, find the man, however agreeable or even brilliant, possessed of, seemingly, very disproportioned powers.

I have been writing to you about critics, style, and authors, as if my mind were perfectly at ease: never was it less so, and I have trifled on these subjects to escape from *one* that engrosses every thought, every feeling. Strange that, conscious as I am of the hopelessness, the madness of the passion that consumes me, I cannot conquer it. In flight alone

could I find safety, but I have not fortitude enough to banish myself from her I adore.

I can now sympathise with those who are the prey to an ungovernable affection, and believe all the follies to which it can lead its victims; yet am I more than ever sceptical that any man of honour could, under its influence, betray the woman he really loved, into guilt and shame. I have never, even in the wildest dreams of passion, pictured to myself the possibility of triumphing over her virtue. Nay, more; frail and selfish as is the nature of man, I have never even dared to desire such a result. She, pure and bright as she is, might look with the same pity on the sentiment she has given birth to in my breast, as that which angels are supposed to entertain for those almost idolatrous affections of mortals, which are extenuated, if not redeemed, by their intensity, and freedom from guilt. But never

shall this heart be laid bare to her who rules it; for, if I dare not seek her compassion, I would not incur her contempt, by such an unhallowed avowal.

Ever, my dear Mordaunt,

Sincerely yours,

NOTTINGHAM.

FROM LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI TO MISS MONTRESSOR.

CHÈRE CAROLINE,—your last letter has given me great pain. How dreadful, that De Carency should have proved himself in every way so vile! How base must that man be, who betrays the errors to which his own duplicity gave birth! I could forgive his betrayal of my indiscretion, as, *grace à Dieu!* I have escaped

all the evil effects to which it might have led; but, as you are still unmarried, this exposure of the *faiblesse* of your youth may be most mischievous.

I told Florestan, who was furious at the wretch's conduct. He says, that he lately heard that De Carency had been seen in a state of extreme poverty, to which his follies and crimes had reduced him; that he was wholly abandoned by his family, whom he has disgraced, and was hardly to be recognised: such was the change wrought in him, by the dissolute life he has led. Would to heaven he were dead! for he is always capable of annoying me, and exposing you, should it suit his plans so to do.

How delightful it must have been, *ma chère*, to have lived in the time of *l'ancien régime*, when it was so easy to procure a *lettre de cachet*, and immure any troublesome person. Fancy

the comfort of shutting up such a man as this, and so effecting two good purposes: the first, that of preventing his giving publicity to the secret he knows; and the second, the precluding him from further disgracing his family. Yes, *those* times were, indeed, infinitely preferable to these, when one cannot shut up even a worthless menial, unless the law so will it. All the privileges and immunities of *la noblesse* are destroyed; and, except for the pleasure of having a coronet emblazoned on one's carriage and plate, there is no advantage to be derived from a title. What a sad state of things!

I like the conduct of your little romantic friend, Lady Annandale, very much, in this affair of the disclosure; for her romanticism seems to spring from the heart, and not the head, *qui fait toute la difference.* I value hers the more, as here, *l'école romantique* is founded on the imagination; it is an effervescence of

sentimentality, that operates not on the affections, nor influences the conduct. With us, the most romantic people are precisely those who have the least real feeling; while, with you, *au contraire*, the romantic seems to spring from the heart.

Such a woman could not be happy, according to *her* notions, with a man like her husband; and half the women in the world, and particularly Englishwomen, will only be happy in their own way, a species of conduct which is—if you, *ma chère*, will permit a very homely comparison—like that of a hungry man, who determines to appease his appetite with certain viands only, which, not being able to procure, he refuses to accept any substitute; or, if he accepts, murmurs at the disappointment. This is a folly peculiar to woman, and betrays a great want of philosophy: but, though I am aware it is a weakness, I pity those who are its victims.

Lady Annandale would require such a man for a husband as you describe Lord Nottingham to be; and, having missed him (a sad mistake!), will probably be consoled by having him for a friend, until she finds that friendship between a beautiful young woman and a highly gifted, sentimental man, is rather a dangerous experiment. She will love him; and, being romanesque, this sentiment, instead of reconciling her to her destiny, will make her more than ever dissatisfied with it. With some women, love and crime seem inseparable. She will first fear him she loves, then herself, and, afterwards, all that seems to encourage the sentiment, until she has rendered her lover unhappy, and herself miserable.

Women like your friend were not born to bestow, or enjoy happiness, except in the legitimate way; consequently, I fear all your schemes will but tend to increase her discomforts, unless

you could persuade her *caro sposo* to die, and so leave her honourably free to wed Lord Nottingham. Even then, I doubt her being happy. She would, the moment her good lord was gathered to his ancestors, begin to find out that she had not been so *aimable* to him as she might have been. Forgetting all his defects, she would magnify her own; endow the dear deceased with all manner of good qualities, and, because she could not love him while he lived, mourn for him, when dead, with an obstinacy that might lead her to shut out the future consolations of a more fortunate union.

I have seen one or two examples of this folly, in women precisely of the same character and temperament as you describe Lady Annandale to possess — people who, not finding it possible to be happy in their own way, refuse to be so in any other. Now, I am one of those practical people who, eager for happiness, or

even its semblance (which often does nearly as well — on the same principle, that the portrait of a lover consoles us, in some degree, for his absence), grasp at every substitute that offers to replace the rarely attainable and unalloyed good. The result is, that I seldom torment others, and never myself.

I wish you could infuse a little of my philosophy into the mind of Lady Annandale, and then all might be well. Nay, I know not, *chère* Caroline, if *you* also have not occasion for some portion of it, notwithstanding your imagined proficiency in the science. Your philosophy is not, I can already begin to perceive, a very practical one; or, if so, is more exercised towards others than self. With all the advantages of travel, and a perfect knowledge of society on the Continent, you have never been able to master the effects of an atrabilarious temperament, peculiar to

your nation, that leads them to view all *en noir*, whenever events begin to turn contrary to their expectations or desires.

A year in the country, with some man who loved you, and whom you loved, with a few romanesque female neighbours, would convert you into a sentimentalist *de la première force;* repenting past errors as if they were crimes of the deepest die, and atoning for them by every future step, with scrupulous goodness: while I, who am a true optimist, would take all things as the inevitable course of events, which, as I could not control, I would support with gaiety. I am aware that I am indebted to my country for the happy mercurial temperament that assists my philosophy; and I am grateful for it. I am interrupted, to examine my dress for a ball to-night. *Toujours à vous,*

DELPHINE, MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

Mille remercîmens, chère Delphine, for the charming robe you have sent me. It reflects honour on your taste, and on the talent of that empress of *couturières,* Victorine, who has surpassed herself on this occasion. This *jolie robe de bal* looks as if made by the touch of the magical wand of some beneficent fairy, for a Cendrillon to figure in. It arrived without being the least *chiffonné, grâce à monsieur l'ambassadeur de France,* whose frequent couriers and roomy despatch-bags are very *utiles* to us ladies. • Indeed, so frequently have I profited by them of late, that I begin, for the first time, to understand the necessity of having such official dignitaries in our capitals — a necessity I have hitherto rather been inclined to question.

Who was the French writer who called *Ambassadeurs* "the only spies who were openly accredited and respectfully received?"

Apropos des Ambassadeurs, a *ci-devant* one of France has lately been here, Monsieur le Duc de ——; and his reception has been so frigid as to make me feel not a little ashamed of my compatriots. You may remember how enthusiastically he used to speak of *ces chers Anglais, ces bons Anglais, si amicals, si hospitaliers, si prévenans, qui lui etoient tellement attachés et dévoués. Eh bien, ma chère*, would you believe it, *le bon duc* has visited London, no longer an ambassador giving magnificent balls, and *recherché* dinners, as a short time before he had been in the habit of doing, but as a private individual; and in that now rare, but always honourable, position, the faithful friend of a deposed master. You may guess the consequences; *ces chers bons Anglais* have

permitted him to enjoy, unmolested, all the advantages of a strict *incognito*.

"What can we do?" asks one lady, whose doors used to fly open at his approach in the palmy days of his diplomatic splendour. "It is very embarrassing; we see so much of the present ambassador!"

She speaks the truth; her ladyship might say thus of every past, present, and future one who gives *fêtes*.

"The actual people might take it amiss, were we to shew any attention to the *duc*."

"It really is unpleasant having the *duc* here at this moment," says another of his *ci-devant* friends.

"It betrays a want of tact under present circumstances," adds a third.

I have observed, that people who return to a place in altered circumstances are always considered to display this deficiency; and excite

much the same feeling of embarrassment in the minds of their intimates that a dear, deceased, and much-lamented friend would occasion, were he to re-appear on earth some years after those who once wept his loss had become accustomed to it, and to the possession of his property.

Each acquaintance by whom the Duc de —— was *féted* at no distant period, now finds some unanswerable reason for no longer embarrassing him with his attentions; and gets rid of self-reproach for their worldliness, by petulantly censuring the man he has deserted for thus injudiciously testing his past professions of friendship. Perhaps, however, some little excuse may be found for these heartless persons in the frequency of revolutions and changes on the Continent. Here it not unfrequently occurs that the ambassador who gave a *fête* last week, to which all the *élite*

of fashion flocked, is, owing to some alteration of sovereign or government, replaced this week by one of totally opposite politics, who gives his *fêtes* also to the same individuals, and, probably, in the same house. In the mean time his predecessor shrinking into insignificance in some obscure dwelling, anxiously awaits another turn of the wheel of fortune, whose movements have of late become so rapid—owing, probably, to the introduction of railroads —as to baffle all calculation.

Pray, tell me what says the *duc*, and the *Faubourg*, of *ces chers et bons Anglais* at present? But my question, at least, as far as regards *sa seigneurie*, is useless; he is too *comme il faut et digne* to be angry, and too *distrait* even to remember what his good and noble heart would fain forget.

My little friend, Lady Annandale, is caught in the wily archer, Love's net, past doubt, and,

I think, past redemption. She may, and probably will, struggle to extricate her heart; but, alas! woman rarely struggles successfully if once fairly caught; and, like a bird ensnared in the toils of a fowler, only entangles herself more in the meshes by her efforts to regain her freedom.

There are moments when I feel so much pity for this lovely and interesting young creature, that I could yet be capable of sacrificing my own schemes to secure her happiness. Ay, you may smile at this declaration, Delphine, knowing how I have steeled my heart against soft emotions since I became the dupe and victim of — a villain. But a woman, though she may, by circumstances, be compelled to enact the *rôle* of *philosophe*, never ceases to retain one of the inherent and indigenous qualities of her sex; and that is, pity. The young expend it on others, and

the sentiment is called love; the old reserve it all for themselves, and it is named selfishness: the change is merely in the object; the principle is, even in the altered state, identical; consequently, I compassionate, and never blame, the egotists we so frequently meet with in society. Could we read the histories of their lives, and trace the events that led to this selfishness, with how many romances, more touching than all those of fiction, should we become acquainted! By how many pangs, occasioned by others, have they been tried! before closing all the portals of the heart, they endeavoured to supply the place of the expelled idols with one equally deceptive and, perhaps, equally unworthy — SELF!

While others love us, while we are necessary to their happiness, we rarely become egotists. Should we not, then, pardon those unhappy beings who, with hearts yearning with affec-

tion, yet finding none to reciprocate it, are compelled to lavish on self that sum of tenderness meant for their fellow-mortals? Is it not this *besoin d'aimer* that reduces elderly maiden ladies to cherish parrots, monkeys, dogs, and cats, and elderly gentlemen to cultivate less innocent attachments? I could be sentimental on this subject; *mais à quoi bon?* you would only smile, or, worse, yawn, over my lucubrations on it; so I will quit them.

Apropos, not *de bottes*, *mais de sentiment*, how is *le bon marquis?* Is he still as much *épris* as ever with *madame la comtesse?* and is *madame la comtesse* as much *éprise du collier de perle, et autres belles choses?* But, *reflection faite*, as men *will* be inconstant, even with wives as charming as *ma chère* Delphine, it is, on the whole, fortunate, that his *penchants* have never led him *hors de la bonne compagnie;* as too frequently is the case with some of his contem-

poraries. There is something revolting in the sort of society to which a man is exposed in those *liaisons* with meretricious beauties. Well may it be said that gallantry, like misfortune, brings one acquainted with strange companions. How disgusting to think of the brothers, cousins, and friends, of unknown lives, unguessable professions, and unpronounceable names, to whom he must be civil; and the mothers, aunts, and sisters, to whom he must be polite! Do you not remember with horror the woful change that came over your cousin, the Duc de Harfleur's manners, after he had passed a few months in the society of some favourite sultana of this class? The *laissez aller* of his conversation, interlarded with phrases totally new and incomprehensible to our ears; the indolent lounging, *à la sultan*, on every sofa within his reach, and the *nonchalance* with which he permitted us to ring the bell, pick up our

fans if they dropped, negligent of performing any of the *mille petits services, auprès des dames*, which every well-bred man is too happy to fulfil. Oh, I shall never forget it!

By the by, *chère amie*, you would be not a little shocked, could you but witness the free-and-easy style of the men of fashion here. It positively amounts to insolence; yet they do not mean it. No, they only mean to be at *their* ease; but this precludes any well-bred woman from feeling at *hers*, in their society. They are at once *nonchalant* and familiar; make no ceremony of talking of the House of Commons, the political questions of the day, their hunting or shooting, or, in fact, all that peculiarly concerns themselves; rarely, if ever, introducing those topics which are generally supposed to be most agreeable to women.

The Comtesse Hohenlinden told me, that

here the ladies are obliged to study the tastes and pursuits of the gentlemen, in order to find favour in the eyes of those lords of the creation. Is not this a dreadful degradation to our sex? Only fancy women talking of horses, and not only talking of, but visiting them in their stables! Fancy their betting, and keeping books in which are entered not *les douces pensées des dames*, but the wagers they have made, and the odds *pour et contre!* This would not be believed in France; *mais c'est un fait, je vous jure.*

Here, a lady who wishes to captivate, relies, not on her charms, but on her tact, and the weakness to which it is to be opposed. Is the man who is to be won a politician?—she reads all his speeches, an operation painful and impracticable to all save one impelled by a predominant motive. She does more,—she succeeds in remembering some portions of them,

and quotes them with eulogium; when, unless he is the most ungrateful of his sex, she is rewarded by his preferring her to all things save himself and his speeches.

The only chance of defeat consists in the number of competitors for his favour.

If a man is devoted to hunting, the ladies who wish to please him are suddenly struck with admiration for that amusement. "They dote on horses;" they delight in driving to the cover-side; they pat the necks of the "beautiful animals," and praise the red coats of their masters. Nay, examples have been known of their donning scarlet habits, and risking their necks, to attract some coveted Nimrod.

If a man be fond of theatricals, then each lady who aspires to win him is dying to act too. She discovers that the amateur far excels the best actor on the stage. His tragic acting is so affecting (affected, she means); and, having

persuaded him that *he* is the only Romeo alive, she hopes to be selected as his Juliet.

Military men are courted, by the female aspirants flocking to reviews, and doting on martial music. Yachters are vanquished by delicate women, who tremble at the bare idea of a storm, and turn pale at a high wave, declaring, that "they are nowhere so happy as at sea;" that "a yacht is infinitely preferable to a house, and a sailor's life the most agreeable thing in the world, except that of being his wife."

It is thus that ladies in England administer to the weaknesses of the "sterner sex," and subjugate them (*apropos* of the word subjugate, a man said, two days ago, that subjugate and conjugate were synonymous); while you, in *la belle* France, exact that deferential homage which is woman's due, and to which she cannot resign her claims, without being guilty of a want of respect towards

her whole sex. I attribute the *mauvaise manière* of the Englishmen of fashion to the want of dignity of the women.

The long war took so many men away, that, owing to their scarcity, they became more in demand, and the claimants were so numerous, that the claimed grew saucy. This, I imagine, first led to the unnatural system of the men being courted instead of courting; a practice to which they have now become so used, that I know not how it is ever to be eradicated. A French *grisette* would expect — ay, and exact, too — more attention than a London fine lady dreams of meeting from the men of her circle.

Am I not a voluminous, if not a luminous correspondent? One thing I am sure I am, and that is, *chère* Delphine's affectionate friend,

CAROLINE MONTRESSOR.

FROM LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI TO MISS MONTRESSOR.

Your *apperçu* of the peculiarities in the manners and customs of your country, *chère* Caroline, interests me exceedingly, though it excites in me no desire to become a denizen *de l'Angleterre*. I was not prepared to expect such a total want of *retenue* in the circle denominated, *par excellence*, fashionable.

The English, who never do any thing by halves, have, it appears, exaggerated our French freedom and ease *de société*, just as barbarously as they do our *modes;* which they so caricature, that Herbault declares he never can recognise the original model of the *chefs-d'œuvre* he sends to your metropolis, in the vile imitations of them which he sees on some *dame Anglaise*, who, fresh from her native isle, visits his magazine.

Liberty has degenerated into license with the society you describe—not an unusual event: but this is an evil that carries its own remedy; for license is always certain, sooner or later, to produce a reaction, as well in morals as in politics. I should, consequently, not feel surprised at hearing, in a few years, that the *violation des bienséances et de la pudeur des mœurs* which you mention, has led to a revolution, or reformation, re-establishing in England a puritanical severity of manners similar to that which marked the times of the Protector Cromwell.

I have such a dislike to revolutions, that I would deprecate any thing that tends to produce them. They are like earthquakes, which, if they overthrow what is faulty, also destroy much that is good; I, therefore, regret the indecencies that sully your society, because they will, probably, lead to a subversion of

manners quite as disagreeable as the present are objectionable.

There are certain anomalies in English manners, that strike me as being very revolting. I refer to the odious publicity of actions for breaches of conjugal fidelity. With us, husbands are too sufficiently humiliated by a suspicion of the bad conduct of their wives, and shrink from taking any step to prove it. Thus, it never amounts to more than a suspicion, which extends no further than their own immediate circle; and the suspected individuals so conduct themselves in society, that no symptom of indecorous familiarity is ever apparent. Hence, public decency is not violated; and, consequently, public morals are not outraged, however private ones may be sometimes compromised.

With you, how different is the case! An injured husband in England gives publicity to

his wife's shame, and his own dishonour: he uncovers his domestic wounds as beggars do their sores; perchance to excite pity sometimes, but disgust *always*. To prove the injury he has sustained, he must furnish evidence of the affection his unhappy wife felt for him previously to her dereliction from virtue. Thus, the sacred privacy of conjugal love is unveiled before the profane and gloating eyes of that many-headed monster denominated "*the* public." Sentiments of affection, and terms of endearment, become by-words of the coarsest raillery in the mouths of the lowest and grossest rabble. Revolting details of facts demonstrative of the criminality of the accused are not only proclaimed in court, but published in your journals; until all England and the Continent are convinced that the husband is what, with us, a husband would rather die than avow himself to be; and his wife, the

mother of his innocent children, is branded with the searing iron of ignominy.

How a proud man, or a man of honour, can thus expose himself, seems wonderful; and yet such examples occur continually with you. Yours is essentially a commercial country; and every thing, however sacred, even to the affections, are viewed with a reference to this national peculiarity.

Is a husband wounded in the tenderest point, the honour of his wife, he seeks redress by an action against her seducer; and, if he establishes her guilt, and his own shame, the law adjudges him what is considered the full value of both, mulcted from the purse of the paramour.

Are a fond parent's hopes for ever blighted by the seduction of his daughter, he appeals to the law for redress. His child's frailty, previously known but to a few, is proclaimed to

the world; a stain is for ever attached to her name: but the father receives the price at which her virtue was estimated.

Is a young and innocent girl disappointed in her virgin affections by some false youth who had won them, and sought her hand — she flies *not* to solitude to weep over his broken vows, and her too fond credulity, but to the next lawyer, to bring an action against the deceiver for a breach of promise of marriage! She then displays every line "the false one" ever wrote to her; repeats every protestation of love he ever uttered; and seeks to recover a pecuniary compensation as a salve for her wounded heart.

Confess, *ma chère* Caroline, that the examples I have quoted of the commercial habits of your compatriots prove little for the delicacy of their feelings; and, prone as we are, in our Anglomania, to adopt your customs, I do not

think those to which I have alluded are ever likely to become popular in France.

Madame ma mère has lately given us much inquietude by having become a devotee, and placed herself under the guidance of a certain Père Maubois; a Jesuit more remarkable for a covetousness of the good things of this world than for a conduct likely to ensure those of the next. I fear he may induce her to make a will in his favour; but any *exposé* of his real character, on our parts, would only tend to render her more disposed towards him, as she is more self-willed and obstinate than ever.

Adieu, ma chère Caroline! *je vous embrasse. Votre affectionnée*

DELPHINE, MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

I AM *au désespoir, chère* Delphine, at hearing that *le pauvre* Florestan has been so imprudent. I always knew Madame de Heautforte to be *un peu bête,* but I did not suspect her of the folly of encouraging *votre mari's* propensity to extravagance, or still less of the meanness of profiting by it.

This is a *triste affaire,* and may become very embarrassing in its consequences; for Florestan, with an excellent heart, has not the wisest possible head. And so, *madame la duchesse, votre mère,* has become a devotee, *la dernière ressource* of coquettes, who give themselves to God when men slight them. If, indeed, she took to religion, it would be fortunate; but,

unhappily for France, bigotry too often usurps the place of devotion there. I like not the influence le Père Maubois has acquired over her — *mais quoi faire?* My plan would be, to praise him extravagantly to her; for, prone as she is to opposition, this may induce her to take the other side of the question, and ultimately render her disgusted with him.

The newspapers have commenced commenting on Lord Nottingham's marked attention to Lady Annandale. Their *liaison* is announced as an established fact, though neither of them have, I dare say, ever contemplated such a *dénoûment* to their romantic passion.

Augusta will, probably, never see these statements, for she detests scandal too much ever to look into those journals where it may be found; and her adorer, Lord Nottingham, has an equal aversion from it: consequently, their names may be coupled together, and

the most injurious insinuations relative to them circulated about this overgrown metropolis, while they remain in total ignorance of the amusement which such statements afford to their friends, and the triumph it furnishes to their enemies.

Lord Annandale will not, however, be left long in a similar state of ignorance on the subject. Some half dozen dear friends, who cannot bear that a man should not know whatever must inflict pain, will write him anonymous letters to apprise him of his supposed dishonour. They will, probably, send him the paragraphs that announce the mortifying intelligence; and his is precisely the character to be most irritated by this publicity, because his vanity is more intense than his love, and infinitely more vulnerable.

Lord Annandale would have been a good man, had he not lived too much in the heart-

less circle which has demoralised his principles and blunted his better feelings; leaving his *amour propre*, with its inordinate cravings for indulgence, sole arbiter of his own actions, and the sole criterion by which he judges the conduct of others. The woman who would administer to his vanity might not only rule him despotically, but would find in him a kind and affectionate friend; for his disposition is good, and his nature grateful: but she who wounded this omnipotent passion would lose all influence over him, and meet a severe censor and an implacable judge.

Augusta's visible indifference has deeply mortified him; and so soured his opinion of her character, that he will be prone to give ear to charges against her which, had she conciliated, instead of wounding his vanity, he would not for a moment entertain.

This state of their relative feelings and po-

sitions assists my project; and the conviction that Lady Annandale never would be likely to feel an affection for her lord, nor to enjoy felicity in her union with him, reconciles me to the scheme of dissolving the ill-assorted marriage; and of securing for myself the husband who cannot form her happiness, and whose happiness she, certainly, does not constitute.

Whenever a qualm of conscience intrudes, to suggest a doubt whether the means I employ to accomplish the end I aim at be justifiable, I sooth it by mental vows to be so good and irreproachable, when I have gained the goal, that I shall atone for the sins committed by the way.

Is it not thus, that all who do wrong silence "the still small voice of conscience?" for no one, I do believe, was ever yet so obdurate of heart as to meditate a perpetual perseverance

in crime. *Helas!* do I not resemble him who, plunged in guilt, declared that, when he had acquired a certain sum, he would forsake his evil ways, and turn honest?

I am interrupted, and can only add, that, whether faulty or good, I shall be always,

Chère Delphine,

Your affectionate friend,

CAROLINE.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

MA CHÈRE DELPHINE,—I owe you a *dédommagement* for the abstruse essay, *sur les mœurs Anglais*, I inflicted on you in my last letter; and shall, therefore, treat you with lighter matter in this.

"The fashionable world," to use the phrase of the papers, has been thrown into a state of agreeable excitement by the unusual occurrence of a *bal costumé*, which has put into requisition all the *modistes*, *couturières*, and jewellers, of this vast metropolis. Travellers have been consulted, books of costumes referred to, and all, save the means of furnishing the dresses, been taken into grave consideration.

The Comtesse Hohenlinden has been the presiding patroness of this *fête;* and at her house, *les dames les plus à la mode* have met frequently, to consult, demur, and decide, on the momentous subject of their dresses.

Lady Acid, who has gained a reputation for *wit* on the strength of extreme *ill-nature* — which, *entre nous soit dit*, in London is continually mistaken for it — declares that, in a moral point of view, *bals costumés* should be encouraged here, as they compel many ladies

to think of *character* who had long forgotten the advantages of such a possession!

"How novel it must be to several of my friends," said Lady Acid, "to have a character even for one night!"

"Why, after all," said Lord Charles Brettville, "they have done so long, and so well, without such an appendage, that it would be now as useless as the long-exploded pockets."

"How many hearts," drawled out the sentimental Mrs. Coningsby, "beat quicker now, in the anticipation of conquests to be achieved, or chains to be riveted, or truant admirers to be regained ——"

"Or female friends to be mortified!" interrupted Lady Acid.

"I shall go as a Venetian lady," said the Marchioness of Eiderdown, "because it will enable me to wear the whole of my jewels."

" The only occasions on which she is brilliant," whispered Lady Acid in my ear.

" I shall go as a shepherdess," lisped Lady Simper.

" Because the dress will display at once the smallness of her waist, and of her wit," added Lady Acid again.

" I shall go as a Swiss peasant," said Lady Mellicent.

" To shew her legs," rejoined her friend, Lady Acid.

" I have chosen a Greek dress," observed Lady Rawlinson.

" And not ill chosen, either," whispered Lady Acid, " if all we hear of her gaming propensities be true."

" I mean to personate a Magdalen," said Mrs. Walton, " with my hair falling on my shoulders."

"Are you not afraid of people's thinking the character too appropriate?" asked her last discarded admirer.

"My dress shall be that of a Roman empress," said Lady Easy.

"Messalina, I suppose," whispered Lady Acid.

"In what character shall I go?" asked Lord Wellingford.

"In that of the Careless Husband," replied Lady Acid.

"And you, Mr. Milner," demanded another, "what character will you personify?'

"The Poor Gentleman," whispered Lady Acid.

"The report, then, is true," said Lady Rawlinson, "that Mr. Milner is ruined, and lives by his wits."

"As to the being ruined, I believe it is true

enough," answered Lady Acid; "but the living by his wits I hold to be impossible, for the capital is too small to allow interest enough to support even a mouse."

"Observe Wellingford," said Mr. Milner; "how conceited he looks! he thinks himself a perfect Adonis."

"Poor fellow! though no Adonis, he may yet share the same fate," replied Lady Acid,— "that of being destroyed by a *bore* — if he should be again condemned to a *séjour* in the country, *tête-à-tête* with his wife."

"Only look at Mrs. Tylney — how dreadfully dull she is! never are her lips opened but to utter a *bêtise*," observed Lord Charles Fitzhardinge.

"I should forgive her that, if she did not, also, in opening them, display teeth even more disgusting than the stupid speeches she utters,"

said Mr. Milner; "but bad teeth there is no forgiving."

"Why is Lady Overton's face like a solicitor's desk?" asked Mr. Harcourt.

"Oh, spare us your conundrums and puns, I beseech you," said Lady Acid.

"Do you give it up?" asked the inveterate punster, red with anger at Lady Acid's interruption; "why, because it is full of indentures!"

"Dreadful! shocking!" uttered half a-dozen voices; "really, Mr. Harcourt, you should give over puns."

"How gay Lady Georgiana Spencer looks!" observed Lord Charles Fitzhardinge.

"Gay!" interrupted Lady Acid; "she is, *au contraire*, disposed to be *triste* at this moment; but, recollecting that her fine teeth, the only attraction she possesses, must be displayed,

she assumes that everlasting smile. On the same principle, Lady Emily Harrowfield, though naturally a very lively person, takes especial care never to smile, lest she should exhibit her front tooth, which is defective."

This, *chère* Delphine, is a specimen, and not an exaggerated one, of the sort of jargon that usurps the place of conversation in the exclusive circle in London; where ill-nature and dulness reign, and where the most certain mode of making people feel pleased with us, that of rendering them pleased with themselves, is less understood than in any other part of the civilised world. In France, satire often proceeds less from ill-nature than from the desire of displaying wit; but here, as there is little wit to be shewn, the ill-nature must be the paramount motive. With you Lady Acid would not be tolerated; she would

be denominated a *mauvaise langue*, and to her would be applied, and in truth with justice, the French verses,—

> " Si elle n'eut mal parlé de personne,
> On n'eut jamais parlé d'elle."

My countrywomen are not at all prone to pay compliments to each other. Here you never hear any of the thousand civil speeches that pass between ladies in France, which, even though wanting in sincerity, possess a certain charm; as flattery, if judiciously administered, is always acceptable, however much we may despise the flatterer. I call flattery the oil of society, which protects from rust the hinges that sustain it. In England this oil is deficient; and, consequently, the grand machine often creaks and jars. It is only men who flatter women here; and, though their object is an interested one, their strata-

gem is generally crowned with success; probably, in consequence of the rarity of its employment. These calculating and insidious parasites might, on such occasions, repeat the old verse,—

> "I treat her with gentle good-humour, that she,
> In return, may be more than good-humoured to me."

Now, in France a woman is told every day, by every female friend she sees, that she is *belle comme un ange, jolie comme un cœur, faite à ravir—et mille autres choses de ce genre.* She is, consequently, neither delighted nor overwhelmed with gratitude when men address to her similar assurances; and, therefore, the flattery is less dangerous to females with you than with us, and examples of feminine friendships more numerous.

I have nowhere seen so many ridiculous people as among the fashionable circles in

which I live here, and, at the same time, people so little amusing. In Italy and France one feels half disposed to pardon *les gens ridicules*, because they make one laugh; but here there is a gravity, a pretension in their folly, that excites a less agreeable emotion than mirth. On the Continent, the class to which I refer is composed of originals, harmless mono-maniacs, whose singularity is diverting. But here it consists of persons who, being only doomed by nature to be commonplace, sigh for notoriety, and seek it by the only road known to them—affectation.

Lady Jerviscourt aspires to be considered a *bas bleu*, without even a knowledge of orthography; Lord Armytage sets up for a critic, without the power of comprehending one out of every dozen books he peruses; Mr. Radcliffe talks politics all day, though, except to cry "hear, hear!" his voice, luckily for the mem-

bers, was never heard in the House of Commons; and Mr. Robertson sets up for a wit, by repeating all the bad puns he has ever heard, and spoiling half the good stories. Mrs. Addington votes herself a beauty, though nature has refused to sign her patent; Mr. Hutchinson believes himself a man of gallantry, because he stares every woman he meets out of countenance; and Mrs. Thomas Henry Allingham thinks herself a second Sappho, since she has dressed her hair *à la Greque*, and had some of her lame verses set to music by a distressed teacher of that art.

"Mais l'audace est commune, et le bon sens est rare,
Au lieu d'être stupide, souvent on est bizarre."

Adieu, ma chère Delphine! *aimez toujours votre*

CAROLINE.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

How I wish you were in London, *ma chère* Delphine, for a month or two, to enjoy with me the incongruities of the strange *clique* with which I find myself surrounded! They really are unique in their indefatigable pursuit of pleasure, and in the signal unsuccessfulness of the chase.

I should be much more amused by them, had I some one on the spot to whom I could make my observations; but here there is not a soul, except *notre frau gräfinn*, and she is not *spirituelle* enough to perceive *les petits ridicules* which are to me so amusing.

But to quit general society, and to return to that of which I form one. My little friend, Lady Annandale, is making a great fool of herself. She has taken it into her head

that she will turn *réformateur des mœurs à Londres*, never dreaming of the Herculean task she has imposed upon herself. Easier would it be, tenfold, to cleanse the Augean stables, than to purify the morals of those with whom her husband chooses she should live. She objects to associating with ladies whose reputations are not spotless, (to what a limited circle must she, then, confine herself!) and is absurd enough to fancy that rank and fashion are not excuses for vice.

But the best of all is, that, while thus harsh to ladies whose characters have so long been attacked by atrophy that they are wasted almost to a state of invisibility, she is exhibiting herself so continually with Lord Nottingham, that, ere long, her own character bids fair to be problematical. He rides with her every day in the park, — that is, he rides with *us;* but I always take care to get either before or

behind them, with any second beau of the party, and so leave Lady Annandale, who is unconscious of the manœuvre, *tête-à-tête* with her *preux chevalier*.

He accompanies us to all the places which we frequent, and naturally finds himself by her side; while she, nothing loath, listens, with pleased ears, to the praises of her dear Lord and Lady Delaward, or those of her more dear *père et mère*, whom Lord Nottingham affects to love and reverence. Already people begin to regard them with significant looks and smiles, the *avant couriers* of graver and more injurious comments.

The Comtesse Hohenlinden, piqued at Lady Annandale's reserve and coldness towards her, encourages malicious remarks; and I foresee that, some fine day, while dreaming of virtue, and believing that she is to restore it to this modern Babel, Lady Annandale will find her-

self precisely in the category of those ladies whom she so severely reprehends, and whom she would fain exclude from her circle; while they, of course, would rejoice in her downfal.

Every hour's experience proves to me how little chance a portionless *demoiselle* has of obtaining a *bon parti* in England; and my *dernière ressource* is to convert Lady Annandale into the Marchioness of Nottingham, and your friend, into the Countess of Annandale.

I am thus serving three people, at least, if not four: myself, for self should always be the first object served; my young friend, Augusta, for a friend should come after self; Lord Nottingham, who, if my plans succeed, will obtain a charming woman, with whom, I am convinced, he is passionately in love; and Lord Annandale, who, instead of a *romanesque*, *tête montée* wife, who feels only indifference towards him, will possess a —what shall I say? — but

no, one cannot decently praise one's self; so I leave you to finish the sentence.

The truth is, that, vanity apart, I do think that, as he is a vain and ambitious man, I should be to him a more suitable wife than Augusta. She is too high-souled, too poetical, to enact that part which his fashionable tastes, and diplomatic tendencies, require: but I, who know the world, use its slaves for my purposes, while they imagine they are working their own.

Lord Annandale begins to be *ennuyé* by the obsolete fastidiousness of *madame son épouse*, relative to her associates; and, though he will not permit her to exclude them from his house, he cannot compel her to treat them otherwise than with a cold and repulsive ceremony, highly offensive to the guests and to the host. I rather encourage than thwart her folly on this point, because it facilitates my own

plans. The seclusion she prefers throws her more into habits of familiarity with Lord Nottingham; makes him more in love with her every hour; and, if I mistake not, begins to excite in her breast an incipient passion, which will acquire irresistible force before she becomes aware of its existence: for few English children, and *no* French ones, were ever so pure, and innocent, as is this woman.

I do believe — and you know I am not prone to place implicit faith in female purity, or firmness of purpose — that, were Augusta to discover that the sentiment she entertains for Lord Nottingham is of a warmer nature than friendship, she would shun his presence, and seek safety against her own feelings in flight.

My plan is not to alarm her sensitiveness by the least hint, or slightest caution, until she finds herself the universal topic of scandal; her husband believing her guilty; society, as is

usual on such occasions, taking his part, and expelling her from its pale, with the consciousness, in her secret heart, that, though innocent of actual crime, or even a thought of guilt, she loves Lord Nottingham.

To whom, then, but to him, can she turn? She has never cared for the gay world, or taken any pleasure in the society that we consider its greatest attraction. The sense of innocence will console her for any annoyance the publicity of the legal proceedings may produce; and, the divorce obtained, she will become the wife of the man she loves:—no bad exchange for being that of one she neither loved nor respected.

You ask me how all this can be effected without some demonstration of guilt? but nothing is so facile. I have previously explained to you how easily a woman's reputation is sacrificed in London, where "*ce n'est pas la*

faute qui est punie—c'est le bruit qu'elle fait. Les plus bruyantes sont ordinairement les plus légères fautes, et les plus fortes sont les plus silencieuses."

It would require only a little address to satisfy Lord Annandale that he is a wronged husband, because Augusta has indisposed him towards her by her undisguised indifference. His outraged vanity would avenge her coldness by a severity ruinous to her reputation; and an appearance of criminality is easily given, which would justify her husband in resorting to legal proceedings.

You see I have already made myself *au fait* of the *rôle* I intend to enact: wish success to your affectionate friend,

CAROLINE.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

You ask me, *chère* Delphine, to give you an *apperçu* of the leading peculiarities that distinguish our islanders from your volatile compatriots; and of the great influence exercised on society here by that undefined, yet despotic power, fashion. I therefore send you a crude sketch, as a sort of equivalent and repayment for your very interesting story; and you must accept the promptitude with which I comply with your request more as a proof of my desire to gratify you, than of my power of performing the task.

LONDON FASHIONABLE SOCIETY.

Among the numerous peculiarities of the English, is an extreme susceptibility with regard

to any criticism on their habits, manners, and customs; and an inveterate indignation against the individuals who are so hardy as to attempt it. If any foreigner, not *très répandu dans la société* here, writes his sentiments on the country, he is proclaimed to be *un ignorant*, full of presumption, whose opinions are unworthy of notice; but if he *has* been *très répandu*, all the vials of wrath are emptied on his luckless head. To describe what he has seen, is pronounced to be a most indelicate breach of propriety and hospitality. To say that the heavy magnificence of aristocratic dinners sometimes imposes a constraint on the guests, is, for a man who has dined with Lords A, B, and C, an indecent violation of *les bienséances;* and to note down that *soirées* of three, four, and five hundred persons, in rooms comparatively small, are not agreeable, is an outrage of all *les convenances* in the favoured

person who has been seen jammed in the doorways, or scrambling on the stairs, at the houses of any of the ladies of fashion to which an *entrée* is considered a distinction.

When personalities are introduced, which I admit to be always objectionable, every one is up in arms. The praised think themselves not sufficiently so; the unnoticed consider themselves aggrieved; and the censured, however slightly the ferule may be applied, are outrageous. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that the books, hitherto published, descriptive of English manners have been defective. The penalty certain to follow a successful portraiture of them will always be likely to deter the attempt; except by some amateur like myself, who exhibits *les ridicules de la société pour s'amuser*, or to amuse a friend.

To describe all that I see here, *il faut être*

Anglais; for no foreigner can penetrate the mysteries of the *coteries* and *cliques* into which society is divided, without having lived some years in the country, and been initiated into its artificial systems. *Your* compatriots, who come here for a few weeks, form the most erroneous opinions of *mine.* Beholding only the surface, they describe, and not always correctly, that of which they had opportunities of judging only superficially, as if they had penetrated all the most secret intricacies of the great machine. Hence, their pictures are never true to the life; but resemble portraits painted from the reflected image of the originals in mirrors — shadows of a shade.

The English are so pre-eminently egotistical, that they regard all foreigners as intruders in their society. Persons who are not *au courant* of the subjects of the day; who know nothing of the loves and hatreds

of each *clique*, the *brouilleries*, scandalous stories, and ridicule, of the individuals who compose them; and who comprehend not the insinuations and *demi-mots* of those around them, cannot be considered otherwise than a bore by a real fashionable of the exclusive circle.

It is true the stranger may be a man of genius, of versatile and brilliant powers of conversation, who has seen much, and reflected more: but what care those with whom he now finds himself? They think only of themselves and their own narrow circle; and all who are not *au fait* of its mysteries are voted *de trop*. To be sure, they sometimes extend their favour to strangers who come in the unquestionable shape of a prince, a *diplomate renommé*, or a *littérateur* of acknowledged reputation. These are received as lions in the great menagerie of fashion; they are fed and stared at, and serve

to lengthen the list of guests published in the *Morning Post* every day, with a due attention to styles and titles. If they remain only a short time in London, they depart in the belief that its polished inhabitants are the most hospitable people in the world, and that its circles present one continued and brilliant *fête*. Little do they imagine that their reputation, and not their merit, procured this flattering attention! Are they drawn out in conversation on the subjects in which they have acquired distinction? Does any one betray the least interest or curiosity relative to them, their pursuits — past, present, or to come — or the impressions they have received in the, to them, novel scenes around? No. When their names have been blazoned forth in all the papers as having dined at L—— House, dejeûned at D—— House, and supped at S—— House, the usual number of times, and their faces

have been sufficiently seen in the heterogeneous crowd styled the fashionable world, people, who stared at them at first, from the curiosity excited by the published programme of their claims to distinction, get accustomed to "the odd-looking man with the brown wig, and the star;" or the "ill-dressed one with a decoration in his button-hole;" or "the man with spectacles and a bald head, who looks so stupid," and think no more of them.

If, however, some Curtius of society magnanimously sacrifices himself for half an hour by throwing himself into the gulf of conversation with any of these exotic worthies, he takes a malicious pleasure in mystifying them; by nodding assent to the expression of their erroneous opinions, and dissenting, by a well-bred shrug or deprecating shake of the head, from those they had with more justice adopted, but which happen not to be in har-

mony either with his prejudices or his love of mischief.

The enlightened stranger now discovers, that the orator whose eloquence had excited admiration abroad is little esteemed at home, because he is viewed through the false prism of opposite politics: that the author whose works have been as enthusiastically commended as universally read in other countries, is undervalued in his own, because his hair curls; or because he dresses too much or too little in the fashion (either of which crimes furnish a sufficient cause for decrying him), or wears yellow gloves, or commits some other equally offensive error. In short, the reputations that, on the Continent, have been stamped by the approval of all the men of genius, which France, Germany, and Italy can boast, are depreciated in the land that gave birth to their possessors; and the truth of the old proverb, that "no

prophet is esteemed in his own country," is no where so perfectly or frequently verified as in England.

I have described the reception given to foreign lions in London: let me now state that given to strangers with less claims to attention.

A foreigner arrives with letters of introduction; or, in other words, certificates of birth, parentage, and — not education. He delivers them at the houses to which they are addressed, and, in return, receives a soup-ticket, *bon pour un jour*.

"What a horrid bore to have this man thrown on our hands!" says *Madame la maitresse de maison;* "his aunt was so *prévenante* for us at Versailles, that we must be civil to him. What is to be done with him?"

"Ask him to dinner, to be sure," replies *Monsieur le mari*.

"But whom can one get to meet him?" demands *Madame*, with an air of chagrin and embarrassment; "people dislike so much meeting foreigners, until they are, at least, somewhat broken into our habits."

"Let me see: oh, yes — the Heberdens have been passing the winter at Paris; they, probably, know him; at all events, the gaieties of the Parisian season will furnish them with a subject in common. Yes, we'll engage the Heberdens."

"Here is a letter and a card from le Comte de Bellechasse," exclaims Lady Grandison. "How tiresome! what is to be done with him? His mother was so civil to us at Paris, that we must be attentive to him."

"Send him a ticket for our box at the opera, mamma," says Lady Anna-Maria.

"And a card for our ball on Friday," lisps Lady Georgina.

"But if, through not knowing London usages, he should become a fixture in the box?" soliloquises mamma.

"But even if he should, mamma, ours is, you know, a double box, and ——"

"We have always plenty of spare room for a *beau*, you would add—*n'est-ce pas*, Anna-Maria? Well, there is one advantage in a double box," continues Lady Grandison, "it enables one to return civilities cheaply."

"Yes," answers Lady Georgina, "a double box at the opera is nearly as cheap a mode of returning civilities in London, as the sending tickets for the Chapelle is Royale, at Paris. Do you remember how we were inundated with them?"

The poor foreigner receives the invitations, the necessity of giving which has caused so much embarrassment to the hospitable donors. After a dinner at each of the houses, to the pro-

prietors of which he has brought letters of credence, he is engaged to make one of a party to Greenwich. Thither he, with some difficulty, finds his way on the appointed day. Having duly admired the exterior of the hospital, and refrained from expressing his disapprobation of the exhalations arising from the mud, observing that the ladies do not object to them, his olfactory nerves are regaled with the mingled odours of fried fish within doors, and the fume of tobacco without. Such are some of the *agrémens* of this interesting excursion: and at last, fit termination, the bill being demanded, the luckless foreigner finds that, for the refined enjoyment he has been *invited* to partake, he has a sum to pay that would have defrayed the expenses of a month in the land of his birth.

This is another cheap mode of returning civilities peculiar to London: cheap only to

the inviters, however; for, to the accepters, it is rather a costly purchase.

The poor man returns, half dead, to his lodging, determined to eschew white-bait, cider-cup, and pink champagne, while he lives. After three days' suffering, and an apothecary's bill even longer than the Greenwich one, he is able to shew himself once more. How you would pity the unfortunate victim, could you behold the lodging in which he has passed those three days, knowing, as you do, how luxurious is the accommodation of the apartment of a Frenchman *comme il faut!* No longer does he inhabit a spacious and lofty suite elegantly furnished; or an *entre-sol*, whose tasteful decoration and comfort are so inviting. Behold him in a small room, three parts of which are occupied by a four-post bed sufficiently large to contain half a dozen persons; this same bed piled with matrasses,

of a colour and texture alone sufficient to banish sleep, but crowned by a feather-bed that defies it. The drapery has become of a nondescript hue, from its long intimacy with the smoky atmosphere, of which the fringe has amply partaken. The light enters by one small window, which commands a view of the house-tops, gutters, chimney-pots, and back-windows, of the parallel street — an enlivening prospect for a solitary invalid! The paper that covers the walls of this chamber has been chosen with a judicious recollection of the smoky tendency of the chimney, and is in perfect keeping with the curtains of the bed and windows. A convex mirror, an ornament peculiar to English lodging-houses, graces the wall, crowned by an eagle who has lost one wing; yet, as though its escape from its captivity were still apprehended, continues to hold in its beak divers chains of brass, that

fall gracefully back to the frame. One look in such a mirror is always sufficient to disgust the vainest man with his own physiognomy. The hall of this abode is generally occupied by three or four foreign couriers smoking cigars; and the house breathes of the united perfumes of soup, garlic, and *gruyère* cheese. The mansion stands in some populous street or square, in a district rarely visited except by foreigners, who seem to have a predilection for such places, and are ignorant of how vulgar they are considered to be; but, being kept by Frenchmen or Italians, their compatriots imagine they will be less extravagantly charged, if less comfortably lodged.

You will naturally wonder how I can have acquired a knowledge of such an abode as the one I have described; but your wonder will cease when I tell you that it was precisely in such a one that I found *la pauvre* Comtesse

de Mellancourt recovering from the effects of her sea-voyage, and lamenting her fate in being so lodged. Had I not informed her, that comfort, and elegance too, might be found in a London hotel, she would have submitted to her fate, and have returned to Paris exclaiming against the *mal propreté, et manque de tous les agrémens, des auberges Anglaises.* But Lord Annandale kindly recommended her to one where she did nothing but admire *l'extrême propreté, et le tapis de l'escalier;* which last household adornment, I observe, never fails to excite the admiration of your country men and women.

A dinner at Richmond follows the convalescence of the unfortunate foreigner, whose lodging I described; where muddy eels, cutlets—such as are never seen out of England—ducks, that taste more of fish than do the eels, and peas, that "have fallen into the sere and yellow leaf," tempt his delicate appetite: and for this

luxurious fare he has also to pay, though invited, a sum that would have furnished the most *recherché* dinner at Lointiers, or the Rocher de Cancalles. Do you not pity your compatriot, *ma chère* Delphine?

Read this description to Florestan, who has such brilliant notions of the advantages to be enjoyed here: but tell him, also, that to the stranger who comes with a well-filled purse, Thomas's Hotel, the Clarendon, Grillon's, and some others, offer comforts not to be despised even by his and your fastidious taste.

A London season resembles the Saturnalia of Rome; during which, though a perfect liberty is professed to be allowed, the chains of the bondsmen are heard to rattle even while they dance. All here are slaves; yes, positive slaves, and to the most tyrannical of all sovereigns — Fashion. Does it not appear absurd that *la mode*, which you in France control, and use

as an *accessoire* to your pleasures, we English elevate into a despot? who, like all despots, avenges on his subjects the weakness that led to his elevation, by depriving them of all volition, or, at least, all exercise of it. Endless are the sacrifices this Juggernaut exacts, and the penalties he imposes; but, in their submission to his decrees, his vassals are kept in countenance by their mutual emulation in shameless subserviency. So few, indeed, are the examples of refractoriness which occur, that these biped spaniels are seldom reminded that it is possible to rebel.

Nothing can be more indefinite than this imaginary good, yet nothing is more tyrannical than the laws it enacts, and the sacrifices it imposes. It prescribes certain quarters of the town for the residence of its votaries; certain persons, whose acquaintance, *coute qui coute*, must be cultivated; and certain others,

who are to be as scrupulously avoided; certain equipages in which *les élégants* are to appear, and certain places where those equipages are to be exhibited; certain tradespeople who are to be employed; a certain style of magnificence in dinners, which must be adopted; and certain guests, whose presence is considered to be indispensable.

Now, as a due attention to these laws entails expenses not unfrequently far exceeding the fortunes of the votaries of fashion, it is not to be wondered at that they are often involved in embarrassments, terminating in ruin, and not unfrequently in crime, and its worst consequences. The moment they can no longer support the appearance they assumed, they are driven with ignominy from the circle, to gain an entrance into which, they sacrificed fortune and fame. Their pretension and folly are severely reprobated by those, to conciliate whom,

they incurred ruin; and they have not even the *triste* consolation of being followed into the retreats their poverty imposes, by the pity of their partners in error.

To propitiate this more than Eastern tyrant, his subjects form new friendships with persons they cannot esteem; and break through old ones with persons they loved. Even the ties of blood are violated at his mandate; for what daughter or son could exhibit affection towards the authors of their being, if they happened to be voted without the pale of fashion? The most reprehensible and undisguised bad conduct is tolerated, if the practiser is *à la mode;* the most disagreeable persons, *fêtés,* and the most stupid, *recherchés,* if once the seal of fashion be placed on their passports.

Fashion reigns omnipotent in London. Its stamp can give currency to the basest metal, and buoyancy to the heaviest dulness. Men

of bad reputation, and women without any, can, by the power of Fashion, be kept afloat in the society it patronises; and persons of high birth and station, with unsullied names, may be rejected, if this chameleon deity looks coldly on them.

The favourites of Fashion are, indeed, a motley crew. Beauty, virtue, wit, or goodness, are rarely numbered among them; but, *en revanche*, the vicious, the dull, the frivolous, and the impudent, abound. Lady So-and-so is cited, in the clubs and coteries, as furnishing as much cause of complaint to her admirers, individually, as to her husband. Her acquaintances in general, and her friends in particular, do not attempt to deny the justice of the accusation; but Lady So-and-so is a fashionable woman, and, consequently, is received *partout*. Lord So-and-so, or Mr. So-

and-so, is said to have ruined many men, and more women; he is suspected of a dexterity at play, and skill in calculation, that would not disgrace the most adroit professors of slight-of-hand; but Lord So-and-so, or Mr. So-and-so, is a man of fashion, and, as such, has the *entrée* wherever Fashion is worshipped.

Even to inanimate objects extends the insidious and omnipotent influence of this moral upas-tree. Time and space are alike controlled by it; and the very drives and walks have not only their local and actual, but their intermittent and recurrent fashion. *Sunday* after *Sunday* (but only on this magical day) crowds of our sex may be seen toiling to the Zoological Gardens, to exhibit at once their gay clothes, flirtations, and the proofs of their addiction to the study of natural history, in their accompanying and extensive train of biped animals;

who, though far more ridiculous, are infinitely less amusing than those in the surrounding cages.

Ask them why they frequent this place, Sabbath after Sabbath, having long since exhausted their *naïve* observations on the monkeys, and they will tell you that "every one comes — there is such a crowd;" and that on this day alone the mob — their synonyme for people — cannot get in; and, therefore, they select it. In my simplicity, I ventured to comment on the absurdity of excluding the reputable and intelligent mechanics, and their wives and daughters, from the garden, the only day their avocations allowed them a few hours for recreation.

I was answered by, "Fancy how dreadful it would be for us to have such people *nez-à-nez avec nous* at every turn! Oh, it would be insupportable!"

" I cannot fancy," resumed I, " that there could be any thing at all insupportable in it ; *au contraire,* the seeing new and agreeable faces, and witnessing the enjoyment of those who have fewer sources of pleasure than we possess, would be more animating than encountering the vapid countenances that people have been yawning at every night during the season ; and who look as weary at beholding us, as we are at looking at them. It has been said by one of their most remarkable poets — one, too, of their own rank — that the English fashionables are as tired as they are tiresome : but this fact, like the secrets of free-masonry, is attempted to be concealed, lest new votaries should be deterred from entering the lethargic circle.

We live in a state of feverish excitement here, which, after having once submitted to for a while, becomes as necessary as opium to

its habitual consumers. *Fêtes*, balls, *soirées*, dinners, *déjeûners*, follow in quick succession, always attended by the same faces, and the individuals nearly always attired in the same dresses; for my countrywomen are not remarkable for the *fraicheur* of their toilettes. To be seen every where, or, at least, in those places where people of fashion congregate, seems to be an indispensable duty with the English, and to avow the *ennui* they experience is apparently equally essential.

"What a crowd!"

"How very oppressive the heat is!"

"Are you going to Lady Leslie's?"

"How dull this *soirée* is!"

These are the phrases one hears murmured around, night after night; yet the persons who utter them would be *au désespoir* were they not present in the very scenes they condemn.

Not that they do not experience the *ennui* of which they complain; but that they fear their absence might be attributed to the want of an invitation, a calamity which would be considered tantamount to a loss of *caste*.

While, however, avowing that their amusements only excite *ennui*, they need not affect to be *ennuyant*, for that quality appears to be inherent in their natures. Yet they are vain of the supposed superiority which they imagine their assumption of fastidiousness of taste implies; mistaking for refinement that morbid state of mental inanity which proceeds from excessive luxury and idleness. The English fashionables are the only people who unshrinkingly display their mental diseases, though they carefully conceal their physical ones. I refer again to that epidemic malady, *ennui*, under which all of a certain class ostentatiously suffer. They

seem not to be aware that it proceeds from weak intellects, incapable of rational occupation, or innocent amusement.

A fine lady or gentleman here acknowledges, without embarrassment, that she or he is "*ennuyé* to death," or "bored to extinction;" two favourite phrases, which those who have the misfortune to listen to them might with truth repeat.

The exclusive circle is at war with genius and talent, though their vanity often induces them to draw to their dull routs and prosy dinners, those who are considered to possess either of these attributes in an eminent degree. They think "it looks well" (another favourite phrase) to see among the aristocratic names that are every day announced in the newspapers, as having partaken of their ostentatious hospitalities, those that form the aristocracy of genius; for they imagine themselves modern

Mæcenases, who patronise poets and philosophers, from the association with whom they expect to derive distinction.

For gentle dulness they have a peculiar predilection — from sympathy, I suppose; a fellow-feeling being said to make men wondrous kind.

A few of the houses with the most pretensions to literary taste have their tame poets and *petits littérateurs,* who run about as docile, and more parasitical, than lap-dogs; and, like them, are equally well-fed, ay, and certainly equally spoiled. The dull *plaisanteries,* thrice-told anecdotes, and *résumés* of the scandal of each week, served up *réchauffés* by these pigmies of literature, are received most graciously by their patrons, who agree in opinion with the French writer,—

> " Nul n'aura de l'esprit
> Hors nous et nos amis."

You will think, *chère* Delphine, that my picture of fashionable life is too highly coloured, but, believe me, it is not so; and, to convince you of this, I send you an extract from a sensible article, in an influential publication that appears here once a quarter; by which you will perceive that this class of society is by no means composed of the *élite* of the aristocracy of the country.

"We allude to the self-elected leaders of what is called the fashionable world and their followers, — a set of weak, trifling, and often profligate people, by no means eminent for birth, wealth, or personal accomplishment, who, by dint of mere assumption, and by persuading a few men and women of real influence and high station to co-operate with them, have contrived to acquire a formidable description of influence in society, which seldom offers an effective resistance to a well-

organised system of exclusiveness. A few pretty women, not in the highest rank of the nobility, met at Devonshire House, to practise quadrilles, then recently imported from the Continent. The establishment of a subscription-ball was suggested, to which none but the very *élite* were to be admissible; the subscription to be low, with the view of checking the obtrusive vulgarity of wealth. The fancy took; and when it transpired that the patronesses had actually refused a most estimable English duchess, all London became mad to be admitted; exclusion was universally regarded as a positive loss of *caste;* and no arts of solicitation were left untried to avert so terrible a catastrophe. The wives and daughters of the oldest provincial gentry, with pedigrees traced up to the Heptarchy, have been seen humbling themselves, by the lowest arts of degradation, to soften the obdurate autocrat-

esses; and we fear it is no exaggeration to say, that more than one *parvenu* has been known to barter his vote in parliament, and more than one *parvenue* her honour, for a ball-ticket. The prestige has greatly abated, and the institution is now tottering to its fall; but its origin is worth recording, as a ludicrous phenomenon in the progress of society."— *Quarterly Review,* for September 1836.

We have, in England, however, innumerable members of the aristocracy as exempt from the follies that stain the votaries of fashion, as they are unambitious of mingling with them. For the knowledge of their existence, I have to thank a discussion into which, a few days ago, I inadvertently fell, with Lord Nottingham; and which has enlightened me on some subjects on which I had formed erroneous conclusions. I observed, *à-propos* to some tale of

scandal repeated by Lord Charles Fitzhardinge, that for one example of bad conduct in France, I heard, at least, ten cited here.

"Yes, *cited*," replied Lord Nottingham; "but what does this prove, Miss Montressor? Why, not that there is more impropriety here than in France, but that we attach more importance to its existence, and more censure to those who practise it. If vice were as frequent in England as you imagine, it might be practised with greater impunity. The examples of it are not, as you observe, cited in France; but this fact, far from proving their non-existence, only implies that their frequency has habituated people to them; and that, therefore, they have ceased to excite the indignation, or to be visited by the obloquy, which attends similar offences in England. That country is the most demoralised where vice meets the fewest censurers. You must not

judge Englishwomen by the specimens Lord Charles Fitzhardinge has named ; or by some of those you meet in the *coterie* of the Comtesse of Hohenlinden. These form the exceptions to the female propriety which, be assured, exists to a greater extent among the women of this country than in any other—a fact, of which the reprobation with which the conduct of the erring few is visited, furnishes the most undeniable proof."

"But I do not admit that impropriety of conduct meets with this reprobation," answered I ; "*au contraire*, I assert, that nowhere is it practised with such impunity as here."

"Why will you judge England so superficially, Miss Montressor ? and Englishwomen, by the *clique* (for it is nothing more), termed exclusives ? which, like an unhealthy excrescence, has grown out of the repletion produced by

excess of luxury. The individuals composing the circle by which you judge, form, I repeat, the exception to the general rule. They act as if they considered themselves not amenable to the laws of society; and have established a little republic of their own, to oppose the government they could not subvert. This *clique* stands apart, and long may it continue so, from the general mass of the higher class; and is at once our shame, and our reproach, in the estimation of those who, like you, consider its members, in consequence of their meretricious glare of fashion, as specimens of the morals and conduct of the great body of our aristocracy and gentry. As well might you suppose that, because our papers teem with reports of theft, all the English are addicted to that crime, as imagine that, because some individuals in a large community are guilty of

errors, all the rest are also culpable ; whereas, in no country is theft viewed with more abhorrence, or punished with greater severity."

You see, *chère* Delphine, that I give you *le pour et le contre* in this description, in which I had not the superiority ; unlike *notre bonne* Duchesse de Mirrecourt, who repeats only the strong part of her own conversations, and the weak ones of her adversaries. Is not this being frank ?

Hitherto I have imagined, that goodness and dulness were synonymous terms ; a mistake but too often made by those who, like me, look more to the pleasures of society than the happiness of a home. But the truth is, *chère* Delphine, that I have lived too much in the world, and examined too little my own heart, to have become acquainted with the quality of the soil ; which, though perhaps naturally, not altogether evil, is covered by an artificial and

rocky stratum, that requires a careful and laborious cultivation to render it capable of producing aught but tares.

In *la belle* France one sees little of home; there is even in your language no epithet to express it: for the *chez moi* is associated in my mind with certain evening receptions to some fifty of one's acquaintances, rather than with the domestic circle; and reminds me of your answer to *madame votre mère*, when she accused you of never being *chez vous*:— "*Mais, ma chère mère, je suis, au contraire, très casanière cette année, car je reste chez moi deux fois dans la semaine; au lieu que, l'année passée, je ne restai qu'une.*" Well do I remember those two weekly *soirées*, when your *salon* was filled with the *élite* of all the *spirituel* in Paris; and this we considered being *très casanier, n'est-ce pas?* Yet those were pleasant times, for, unlike the plan adopted here,

amusement was not made the business of life, and we paused not to consider, as the English do, whether we were fashionable or unfashionable; or how many persons' vanities we had wounded by excluding them from our *réunions* — a reflection indispensable, as it appears to me, to the perfect enjoyment of my inanimate and *blasés* compatriots.

You ask me, *chère amie*, for a description or definition of a woman of fashion, according to the common acceptation of the term here. They are actresses, who play difficult parts on the stage of life, to audiences who are ever more prone to hiss than to applaud their performances. They lose their individuality as wives, daughters, sisters, and mothers, the sole parts women ought to enact, being recognised only in those fictitious *rôles* in which they have chosen to exhibit before the public, and for which frivolous mummery, they are paid

by slander, mockery, and contempt. They, as you may well believe, are little aware of the sentiments they excite; *au contraire,* they imagine themselves to be admired and envied; and even should some demonstration of the reverse meet their observation, they would, in all probability, attribute it to jealousy and envy.

There are few *métiers* more fatiguing than that of a woman of fashion. She is condemned to a perpetual activity to maintain her position, as Napoleon was, to make war abroad to preserve his power at home. Indolence on her part would quickly lead to her deposition, for there are as many competitors for the *rôle* as for that of *premier;* and, like their political parallels, the most incapable are those who are the most indefatigable in seeking the distinction.

A woman of fashion must be callous to the domestic affections. How could she fulfil the

arduous duties of her post, were she watching by the sick-bed of some dear relative, or consoling some bereaved one? How could she devote that attention to the regulations which, as a patroness of Almack's, she must see enforced, were her mornings devoted to superintending the studies of her children, or overlooking the details of her *ménage?* Luckily for women of fashion, excellent nurses can now be hired, who perform for gold the duties to the sick which were wont to be fulfilled at the instigation of affection. Humble companions, known here under the appellation of toadies, speak, look, or read, according to order, by the easy-chair or sofa of the mourner; governesses, with "all manner of accomplishments," and no manner of knowledge, instruct the young ladies how to — catch rich husbands; and *maîtres d'hôtel* regulate the establishment, and also the *per centage* they

are to receive for encouraging waste and extortion in it.

The woman of fashion, having emancipated herself from the drudgery of household cares, and domestic duties, and, having substituted the services of hirelings, has ample time to perform the self-imposed functions of her office. She can devote a considerable portion of her mornings to looking over and answering the various applications for admission to Almack's. She can reject or accede to the humble petitions, for the success of which young hearts throb, and old ones deign to sue. She can receive the *élite* of her coterie, sit in conclave on the admissibility of those who aspire to enter it, take a *femininely* warm part in the politics of whichever faction she has adopted; and pronounce on the ineligibility of those of the opposite one, without ever having given a serious thought (for ladies of fashion

are not addicted to serious thoughts) to the merits or qualifications of either party. Thus, half the life of the being I have attempted to describe is passed; not so much in seeking her own gratification as in endeavouring to impede that of others.

A wish of displaying the power she has usurped, induces her, not unfrequently, to an arbitrary and ill-natured abuse of it, exhibited in preventing the access of others to scenes where they, in their ignorance, imagine enjoyment is to be found; but where she, in her knowledge, has only too often proved the fallacy of their supposition.

How different is the life of a *grande dame chez vous!* for, luckily, you have no women of fashion. In Paris, each lady is satisfied with the distinction to which her birth, station, and talents, entitle her. She is only one of a galaxy of stars that shine in the same sphere. She

desires to enjoy the pleasures thrown into her own path, but has no wish to exclude others from a participation in them; and is happy in the freedom from all that disagreeable responsibility which is the principal object of the ambition of a woman of fashion in London.

If I have *ennuyed* you by the *tableau* I have attempted to paint, pardon me; and be assured it is hardly more *ennuyeux* than the originals from which it was sketched.

In no country is selfishness so unblushingly practised, and openly avowed, as in England, by a certain set. "Be prosperous and happy, never require our services, and we will remain your friends," is the principle on which society acts here; and this is so well understood, that, for the most part, those who stand in need of aid, shrink from soliciting it from their closest and dearest nominal friends.

But this selfishness is apparent in the gene-

rality of the actions of my countrymen. If a person, with whom they have been in the habit of associating, leaves England for a year, and then returns, his former acquaintances seldom seek to renew the intimacy. They have, during his absence, filled up his place; they have become accustomed not to look for, or go to him; and it requires a year, at least, with a good house and a good cook, to re-establish the friendships his absence has interrupted.

A man repairs to India, condemned by sad necessity to recruit his shattered fortunes. He goes, casting many a longing, lingering look behind, at the haunts and companions of his youth, with whom he leaves a portion of his heart. He returns with his dearly bought gold, purchased with his best years, and no inconsiderable portion of his liver, impatient to mingle again with those from whom he sighed to part. He has forgotten the characteristic coldness of

manner of his countrymen, and approaches each remembered face, with gladness and warmth; when he is chilled by a careless "How are you?" accompanied by an extension of the fore-finger of the right hand, and followed by a *nonchalant* demand of, "How long have you been in town? I have not seen you for some time."

He encounters the same reception from all his old associates, who, reminded by the change in his face of the possibility of a nearly similar one in their own visages, conceive a dislike to him; and, unless he is supposed to possess countless lacs of rupees, and to be fond of play, he is voted a bore, and condemned to seek for society among the golden-visaged members of the Asiatic club, who can sympathise in his loss of liver, and expatiate on the comforts of curry and sangarree.

A good cook is the most infallible essential

towards the acquisition of popularity in London; and he who allows a dozen guests to judge of the talents of his *chef de cuisine*, once a week, is certain of being considered a person of importance. The stomach is so near the heart, that he who gratifies the one, will be sure to make an agreeable impression on the other: hence, a giver of good dinners is always popular. He may be a man suspected of having perpetrated many evil deeds, and convicted of some; but if he stops the mouths of a certain set of *gourmands* with *fillets de volaille aux truffes*, he may defy censure.

A modern Lucullus, whose fame was less approved than his dinners, was once nearly cut by his friends because he refused to submit to the extravagant demands of his cook, who asked for double the usual wages; and it was not until he had satisfied them, by positive

proof, that the successor was quite as good an *artiste*, that they renewed the bond of union.

You, who have seen society in Italy, Germany, and France, can form no idea of its incongruities in England. Its laws — if laws they may be called — are at once the most absurd and partial; the most lax in the general principles, and unjust in their individual punishments.

Yet this country, which we on the Continent were led to believe was the land, *par excellence*, where female propriety was the most indispensable essential for ensuring a good reception; and the want of it a barrier which neither rank, wealth, nor genius, could enable their possessor to surmount,—every day's experience proves to be precisely that where its absence is the least severely punished.

Nothing is more usual than to hear, in a

morning visit, reports the most injurious to female honour, of divers ladies, and yet meet those very persons, in the most fashionable society at night, as well received as if no such rumours had ever existed. In candour, I ought to add, that such examples are, I believe, wholly confined to the exclusive, or ultra-fashionable circle; for it is generally admitted, that there is to be found among the English aristocracy some of the brightest models of female purity and decorum. But these mix rarely with the *clique* self-named exclusive, who are for the most part composed of the impoverished *noblesse*, coquettes of doubtful, or, rather, *not* doubtful, reputations, silly aspirants to notoriety, imagining that unflattering distinction to be a species of celebrity.

Such are the persons who assume to give the tone to society in London: judge, then,

what that tone must be! It has all the frivolity and *légèreté* of the Parisian circles; but not the *esprit*, vivacity, and ease, that characterise them: and, above all, not that attention to *les bienséances*, which, in France, precludes a woman from violating *les convenances de société*, however she may in private be deficient in morality.

I should like to have an opportunity of judging all the various classes of society here, being, as you are aware, *un peu philosophe;* and rather given to study the bipeds that compose the different grades.

Madame de Staël compared the English to the favourite beverage of the lower order — porter: the top all froth, the middle good, and the bottom dregs. This simile contains, I believe, more truth than is to be found in many of the paradoxical comparisons of that

highly gifted woman, who sometimes played with her genius, as our favourite Malibran does with her voice, more to surprise than please.

The middle class here possess, I am told, all the advantages of education and refinement, exempt from the demoralisation that, but too frequently, accompany and sully them : an exemption which even I, with all my philosophy, think is to be attributed to the influence of religious principles, and to the habits of discipline and decorum which they never fail to engender. Yes, *reflexion faite*, I am compelled to acknowledge, that all I have seen of other countries and this, has led to the conviction, that religion is the best guarantee for the prosperity and stability of a nation.

Literature and the fine arts are, I understand, generally and successfully cultivated by the class to which I refer ; and their humanising effect no one can doubt, who has

witnessed the charms they diffuse over the monotony of the domestic circle. Accomplishments are not sought by this section of society for the purpose of display; they are acquired as furnishing sources of occupation and enjoyment, and yield both. There is one folly, however, which I hear ascribed as peculiarly appertaining to them; and that is, an assumption of belonging to the upper class. Each grade cherishes a similar belief, which causes subdivisions of society more gratifying to the puerile vanity of the individuals who compose them, than conducive to general habits of agreeable intercourse.

Each hour that I spend in London presents to me some new feature in society, totally different from what I have witnessed in other countries. Among the most remarkable, is an inordinate love of scandal, that induces its votaries to give credence to any report,

however exaggerated or improbable. Scandal reigns here unbridled; and unredeemed by the wit which renders it so *piquant* with you in France, that, in listening to some *on dit plein de malice*, one is self-excused for the smile it excites. Here there is no such varnish to the crude ebullitions of ill-nature and envy, that render fashionable society as disagreeable as it is dangerous. Every one seems disposed to put the very worst interpretation on the actions of his or her acquaintance; and never to be more amused than when listening to, or detailing, the errors attributed to them.

This peculiar taste for scandal in my compatriots is so well known, that it has become a staple commodity of traffic: journals have been established to retail it; and the more pungent the satire they contain, the more extensive is their sale. Who could resist

reading an attack on some dear friend, some "poor dear lady This, or Mrs. That, so horribly shewn up on Sundays!" The men gloat over the papers in their clubs, consoled for the censure on themselves by that on their associates; and the women peruse them in the privacy of their *boudoirs*, or dressing-rooms, disclaiming, among their acquaintances, "ever having seen the abominable paper."

In London, any woman in a brilliant position may lose her reputation in a week, without having even imagined a dereliction from honour. There is so much *médisance* continually going on; people are, at once, so idle and malicious, that they seize with avidity on every new subject of scandal; and repeat it so often, that they end by not only making others believe, but by believing it themselves.

A gentleman being seen thrice with a lady in public, and as many times with her husband,

is sufficient to lay the foundation of a superstructure of scandal that will defy the possibility of refutation.

Each individual of the idle and malicious persons who love to propagate such tales, will repeat, wherever they go, "Have you seen Lord D—— and Lady E——? How they are shewing themselves up! they are never asunder."

This slander circulated at three or four clubs, where female reputations are lost with as much facility as fortunes, and retailed at half-a-dozen fashionable parties, sets the whole town talking; and poor Lady E—— finds herself the general topic, because she was thrice attended by Lord D—— in public, though perhaps in private they had never met once.

Lord E—— is then held up either as a dupe or as an accomplice in his wife's guilt; for guilt is immediately presumed. He is

pitied by one, blamed by another, and laughed at by nearly all; for even the pitiers cannot resist a laugh at a dishonoured husband. Lady E—— is cried up, or rather cried down, as a most vile and vicious woman, though an idea of vice had probably never entered her head; or else she is compassionated as a victim to the carelessness of a husband, who was so wicked as to permit her to be thrice attended in public by Lord D——; and who had himself been seen twice arm-in-arm with that nobleman,—an occurrence which is received as a proof of his cognisance of the *liaison*.

The lady's reputation is gone, the husband's character suspected, the supposed lover is envied by his contemporary *beaux;* and the affair furnishes conversation until some other reputation is offered up as a sacrifice on the altar of scandal.

Lady E—— is not, however, expelled from

society by her supposed guilt. Oh, no! as long as her husband countenances her, she is received as before; her acquaintances, being content with proclaiming her fault, desire not its punishment. If she happens to have a good disposition, her consciousness of innocence disposes her to believe every accused woman equally free from guilt as herself. She, consequently, pities, and associates with some of the most unworthy of her sex; and so puts the seal on her own supposed culpability. If, on the contrary, hers is not an amiable nature, this undeserved bereavement of reputation will make her slight the substance of the virtue of which she has lost the shadow: and she ends by becoming what she was previously only suspected to be. This is the state of London fashionable society, where appearances alone are judged; where not cause, but effect, is

denounced; and where not crime, but its exposure, is punished.

Instances not unfrequently occur of women, free from any more serious charges than levity and imprudence, being subjected to the penalty that ought to be awarded to guilt alone. I refer to cases where the reports circulated through coteries and clubs are afterwards inserted in newspapers; one of which, containing the scandalous charges, is sent by some malicious person to the husband.

His *amour propre*, if not *amour* for her, is incurably wounded. If he is a weak man, and the majority of fashionable men are weak, he concludes that her conduct must have been indeed glaringly indecorous, or it never could have obtained such odious publicity; not reflecting, that the statement he has perused is only an exaggerated version of the gossip of

society, founded on no more solid basis than the unmeaning attentions he has himself beheld without alarm or censure. He recalls to mind every incident, however trivial, connected with her general demeanour; and none of them are now viewed impartially.

Influenced by his irritated vanity, he has already prejudged and condemned her; without any proof, save the slander of a newspaper, confirmed, perhaps, by an indelicate and injudicious appeal to his domestics, who have drawn their conclusions from the same source.

These very domestics, who had never attached an idea of culpability to her conduct until they had read the flagrant statements of it, now become spies, curious to satisfy themselves of the existence of the guilt they imagine.

Her looks, words, and actions, are narrowly watched. Every note received, every male visitor admitted, becomes, to their jaundiced

optics, presumptive conviction; so that, when questioned on the subject, they report rather what they believe, than what they have seen. Thus, a chain of evidence, based on erroneous conclusions, establishes a legal case: and the victim is expelled from society, seared and branded with dishonour, though perhaps free from crime, who might, if countenanced by her husband, have continued in it, though universally believed to be culpable.

It is not thus in France or Italy, where women, in losing one virtue, are not necessarily exposed to the loss of all. There, our sex are saved from the necessity of hypocrisy; and are not compelled to pull down the reputations of their contemporaries, in order to erect on the ruins a pedestal for the elevation of their own.

So few women in fashionable society here can afford to be merciful to others, that they

are often led to a severity they are far from feeling, to avoid incurring the imputation of impropriety. It is never the guilt or innocence of the accused that is made the point of debate as to her reception; it is, simply whether Lady So-and-so, and a certain *clique*, will countenance her. As it is only the perfectly virtuous and irreproachable that can risk being lenient, you may conclude that, in the exclusive circle, few are the examples of mercy: but, *en revanche*, innumerable are the instances of forbearance towards those whose amatory adventures furnish the daily topic, and who are blessed with husbands whose charity covereth a multitude of sins.

You ask me whether English husbands are, in general, *bons et aimables? Pas du tout, ma chère; tout au contraire.* They are, as far as I can judge from the specimens I have seen, the most selfish beings imaginable.

Numerous are the examples pointed out to me here of men who, a year ago, were the most passionate lovers to their wives, yet who now scarcely conceal the symptoms of the satiety they feel, even from the lately cherished objects that excite it. Men of large fortunes rarely marry from pecuniary motives in England: not that they are exempt from cupidity; very much the contrary is the case; but because heiresses are scarce,— estates being generally entailed on heirs-male. It is only when some rich *parvenu* has a daughter whom he wishes to engraft on a noble stock, that great fortunes are to be obtained by marriage; when the gold acquired by trade returns to support the exhausted coffers of the aristocracy, whose prodigality assisted its accumulation.

The unmarried men in London are remarkable for a degree of selfishness, indulged even to an oblivion of all else, and for a prudent fore-

thought, even in their affections, not so much the result of wisdom, as the dictate of this all-engrossing egotism. Venus herself, *without* a fortune, could hardly tempt them to wear any other fetters than those of her cestus; while a very Gorgon, *with* a large domain, would soon find them eager candidates for the hymeneal chains. They regard every young beauty with distrust and alarm, as having designs on their freedom; or as being likely, by their fascinations, to tempt them into a rash marriage, which they consider as the premature grave of their selfish enjoyments. They look on dowerless wedlock as on death, a misfortune to be encountered perhaps at some remote period, when age and infirmity prevent the pursuit of pleasures, or satiety has palled them. With the distant prospect of settling down at last with some fair young being, who is to be the soother of his irritability, and the nurse of his

infirmities, the man of pleasure systematically and ruthlessly pursues a round of heartless dissipation; until his health broken, and his spirits jaded, he selects his victim, and, in the uncongenial union (which, like the atrocious cruelty of Mezentius, chains the living to the dead), seeks the reward of his selfishness.

The men forming the upper class generally marry for what they term love, which is nothing more than an evanescent caprice, an *envie* to possess some object not otherwise to be obtained. They are so little in the habit of denying themselves any thing they conceive necessary to their pleasure, that one of their race makes little more difficulty of marrying the girl that has struck his fancy, than he does of buying some celebrated horse, for which he has to pay an extravagant price, and probably gets tired of one as soon as the other. During the first brief months—say, three or four—of his

union, he considers and treats his young wife, *not* as the dear friend and companion of his life, the future mother of his children, but as an object of passion; to be idolised while the passion continues, and to be left in loveless solitude—cast, like a faded flower, away—the moment satiety is experienced. She has been indulged to folly, doted on to infatuation, for three months; and then, spoiled by flattery, and corrupted by unwise uxoriousness, she sees herself first neglected, and ultimately abandoned, to bear, as best she may, this humiliating, this torturing change. If she loves her husband, jealousy, with all its venomed pangs, assails her young breast. She knows how ardently, how madly, he can adore, compares his present undisguised coldness with the fervour of the happy past, and concludes (not in general without cause), that another object has usurped her place in his heart.

Love, pride, and jealous rage, are now in arms; and how strong must be the virtue, and how steadfast the principles, that enable her to resist the temptations offered by vanity and vengeance! Reproaches or tears await the inconstant at home: his selfishness makes him loathe both, and he seeks abroad a *dedommagement* for the *ennui* they produce. The result generally is, that his wife either breaks her heart or her marriage-vows, or sinks into that humiliating and humiliated being, an unloved and unpitied hypochondriac; who details her wrongs and maladies, in a whining tone, to the vegetating dowagers and spinsters who have no better occupation than to listen to the tedious catalogue.

How many such women may be seen in society, bearing the barbed arrow of disappointment in their hearts — or, worse, forgetting in flirtations, the neglect that at first wounded!

How many count the weary hours in a solitary home, till daylight sends back the careless husband, with temper irritated by unsuccessful play, or excited to uncongenial gaiety by having won — unthinking that the next night will, in all human probability, see dispersed the gains of this! Does a wife indulge in reproach, she becomes an object of dislike; and if she endures in silence, with a paler cheek or heavy eye, these physical symptoms of what is passing within are considered as so many tacit offences against her liege-lord, who thinks it hard that he cannot ruin his fortune and health, if it please him so to do, without his wife, forsooth, taking it to heart.

Better were it, in good truth, to be condemned to the fate said to be decreed to elderly spinsters — that of leading apes in a place not "to be named to ears polite" — than to be joined to brutes on earth. And yet, spite

of such examples as those to which I have referred, our English young ladies are not alarmed, nor deterred, from using every possible means of entering the pale of matrimony; each, probably, supposing that other women have failed through the want of those attractions which she believes herself to possess, and which *must* retain their empire over him who is to be her lord. A few months of marriage dissipates the flattering illusions she has indulged; and, in proportion to the sanguine hopes she nourished, will be the bitterness of her disappointment.

Those women only escape this fate who, marrying for wealth and station, regard the husband by whom these coveted *agrémens* are obtained, as an appendage inseparable from them to which they attach no other value than as the medium of their acquisition. Hence, no other country holds forth such inducements

to women forming mercenary marriages as does England, by displaying the brief duration of that affection which offers the strongest obstacle to them.

The same gross selfishness that led the fashionable man to marry, leads him, also, to fresh indulgences of his passions. He becomes a confirmed libertine and gambler (for the two vices generally meet in the same polluted heart), and, having wasted youth, health, fortune, and not unfrequently fame, he returns to his cheerless home to inflict his dulness and despondency on the woman he has demoralised, and whose peace he has destroyed.

Lycurgus shewed a profound knowledge of human nature, when he decreed a law, prohibiting husbands from seeing their wives in the day, during the first year of their marriage. He meant to guard against the danger of satiety, that perilous rock, on which so many gallant

vessels have foundered in the port of wedlock. Occasionally, however, modern English husbands are, perhaps, actuated by a similar knowledge of human nature, and a still more potent belief in the advantage to be derived from absence, when they remain away all night from their homes, as well as the greater part of the day. *This*, probably, is the sole cause why the fashionable clubs are filled with Benedicts every night—at least it is but charitable to suppose that such is their object.

These very clubs, too, furnish another and powerful antidote to matrimony. The luxurious sensualists who frequent them, being, for the most part, gastronomers, who prefer a well-dressed dinner to the best dressed woman in the world, are well aware that the *recherché* repasts, with "all appliances to boot," to be obtained at clubs, at a price within their reach, would be totally unattainable in a *ménage* of

their own, except by the relinquishing some other extravagance. They think no woman worth the sacrifice of those delicious dinners, *en garçon*, the well-iced wines, gilded *salons* brilliantly illuminated; and, above all, that *facilité à vivre sans gêne*, which they imagine female society precludes. How resign those luxurious suppers, that render a man as unwilling as he is unfit for the privacy and quiet of home? How abandon the excitement of the hazard-table after, where thousands are risked?

They have calculated, for such men are prone to calculate, that the great business of existence, which, according to their views, consists in eating, gambling, and gossiping, can be more easily and cheaply indulged at Crockford's, than the common comforts of life can be enjoyed in an establishment of their own: *ergo*, they are *célibataires par calcul;* and powerful

indeed must be the charms of her who can win them from their preconcerted plan of selfish pleasures.

But if won, brief is the duration of their abstinence from the exciting pursuits of their bachelor days. A few short months passed, the Benedict returns to his former haunts, rendered now more attractive by the contrast they afford to what he considers the monotony of home; where, as I have previously mentioned, the luckless wife is left to lament in solitude, or to forget in crowds, the brevity of her dream of conjugal felicity.

A young man of fashion, for to such only does my censure apply, thinks that certain expenses are indispensably necessary to his happiness. The cost of a wife, he calculates, must diminish the means of gratifying his personal luxuries; therefore he will not marry until he shall have lost the taste and activity for shooting, hunting,

and yachting. Then, however, the funds appropriated to these expensive pursuits may, he thinks, be directed to the support of a matrimonial establishment.

How could a young man of fashion exist without a shooting-place in the country, with a train of keepers to preserve his game, and dogs to run it down, whatever may be the cost? A moor in the Highlands of Scotland, for grouse-shooting, it would be impossible to forego; and a party to partake its amusements must be assembled. This gratification is obtained at the sacrifice of several hundreds; but the payer has the pleasure of reading in the papers that he and his guests shot so many hundred brace of birds on certain days: and *he* is satisfied.

Many are they who frequent the Highlands with little or no desire for shooting, but who, having no rational pursuit, are at a loss to know how to employ the two months that in-

tervene between the close of the London season and the opening of the hunting one; consequently, at the mandate of fashion, seek this mode of getting rid of time.

The young man of fashion *must*, therefore, hunt at Melton; and, to do so with "decent dignity," requires an establishment of grooms and helpers that would astonish Nimrod himself, could he behold them; and the bills for which seldom fail to astonish the purses of their owners.

But it is not the horses and grooms alone that consume thousands at Melton: the *chasseurs* find that French cooks alone can produce such banquets, as they require to recruit their exhausted frames, and collect at their tables the "best society."

During the interminable evenings, the chase of the day furnishes the inexhaustible topic of conversation, each biped arrogating to himself he merit that belongs solely to his more intelli-

gent quadrupeds. Prolix details of asserted equestrian prowess—each narrator the hero of his own tale—enlivened by episodical histories of their favourite hunters, past and present, fill up the hours that intervene between dinner and the period of retiring to bed; unless cards or dice are introduced, to diversify this rational mode of whiling away the drowsy hours.

Many of the *chasseurs* at Melton are as little partial to hunting as those who frequent the Highland moors are to grouse-shooting. The truth of this assertion is best proved by the joyous alacrity with which, the moment a frost sets in, they rush up to London, like boys released from school; and plunge into all the amusements and dissipation of the metropolis, until a thaw sends them down again, with lengthened faces and shortened purses, to renew their sport.

How often is the thermometer examined with

wistful eyes, and an approach to the freezing-point hailed with pleasure! You will naturally wonder why so heavy an expense as a hunting-establishment is incurred, if they who entail it on themselves like not the amusement. Fashion, ostentation, and the puerile desire of even that species of celebrity which this extravagance can acquire, furnish the inducements; added to the reflection of the utter impossibility of otherwise filling up the winter months.

You must not, however, conclude, that all who hunt at Melton pursue the amusement from the mere desire of being *à la mode*, or from idleness; for some men are to be found there who really enter into the sport with a true zest, without making it the subject of all their thoughts and conversation. These exceptions to my censure are admirable specimens of the true English character,—bold in the field, and

gentle and well-bred out of it. Dispensing a refined hospitality to their friends, and encouraging the race of those fine horses, which are a characteristic boast of my country, but not assimilating themselves to those animals, by utetr uselessness, save in the field.

The many who do not really enjoy the hunting pursue it in emulation of the few who *do*,—nay, affect to like it so passionately, that it is only as I have before said, the gratification which the setting in of a hard frost excites in them, that betrays the real state of their feelings on this point. To such self-imposed sacrifices will men submit from vanity.

Five months at Melton, passed in the intellectual and edifying manner I have described, require an expenditure of some thousands; and the London season which follows it demands scarcely less.

A bachelor's house in some square or

street near the Park, tastefully decorated, and luxuriously furnished, receives the Meltonian *chasseur* in April. He subscribes to an omnibus box at the opera, and to one at most of the theatres *à la mode;* frequents all the places of fashionable resort; enters into a praiseworthy competition with his contemporaries, as to who shall give the most *recherché* dinners every day; and sports equipages that would drive to despair a Parisian *élégant,* so perfect are they in their details, and so faultless in the *ensemble.*

When the season draws near a close, the man of fashion departs for his yacht, which, in the luxuriousness of its accommodation, and splendour of its decoration, far surpasses the famed galley in which Cleopatra sailed down the Cydnus.

What time has such a man as the one whose avocations I have attempted to describe,

to bestow on a wife? or what funds, not appropriated to his own personal gratification, to meet the additional expense she would unavoidably create? No; the individuals who form the *genus* of which I have sketched a specimen, know that a wife, however amiable, or delightful, would only be an obstacle to the pursuit of their selfish pleasures; and, therefore, sedulously avoid matrimony.

The following lines were given to me, the other day, by Lord Charles Fitzhardinge, descriptive of the miseries entailed on a man by marriage; and they are so expressive of the feelings of all this sort of men here, that I send them to you:—

YOUR WIFE

"Who meets you in your days of youth,
Dreaming of joy and hope, forsooth,
And makes you plight to her your truth?—
Your Wife.

" Who greets you with the smiles most bland,
Until a flame of love is fanned;
And you, poor fool! demand her hand?—
Your Wife.

" Who, when the Gordian knot is tied,
Ere yet she ceases to be bride,
Casts all her winning ways aside?—
Your Wife.

" Who jealous is of each past flame,
She ever guessed, or heard you name;
And counts them o'er with sneer and blame?—
Your Wife.

" Who says they all were perfect frights,
And in defaming them delights
To pass whole days — nay, often nights?—
Your Wife.

" Who, as you cool, grows still more fond,
And strains to bursting wedlock's bond,
Till you would joyfully abscond?—
Your Wife.

" Who forces you to dine at home,
When you to Crockford's fain would roam
To feast beneath his gilded dome?—
Your Wife.

" Who gives you soup — ye gods, what stuff!
And fish, of which the smell 's enough!
With mutton cutlets, cold and tough? —
Your Wife.

" Who gives you wine, that ice ne'er knew,
To wash down each unsav'ry stew;
And talk — how little sav'ry too! —
Your Wife.

" Who has the children — ' pretty dears! '—
To come when the dessert appears;
And with their *bon mots* fills your ears?
Your Wife.

" Who forces you, for quiet's sake,
Appointments with choice friends to break,
Hoping, at last, escape to make? —
Your Wife.

" And, while, in pensive reverie,
You think of where you wish to be,
Who quarrels with your gravity? —
Your Wife.

" Who, when at length you rise to go,
Reproaches loud and deep lets flow,
With tears that spring from rage, not wo? —
Your Wife.

" Who lets you find 'twas all in vain
You starved, and gave up iced champagne,
For one determined to complain? —
Your Wife.

" Who selfish is, and void of tact,
Refusing aye to let you act,
As though you *garçon* were, in fact? —
Your Wife.

" Who thinks a husband — ' there's the rub!' —
Should give up living at a club;
And if he wont, will pout and snub? —
Your Wife.

" Who is it that detests your friends,
Accusing them of selfish ends;
And censure on their faults expends? —
Your Wife.

" Who jealous ever is of you,
And yet will have a lover too,
In spite of what you say or do? —
Your Wife.

" Who gets shewn up each Sabbath morn,
With reputation sadly torn,
While you're pronounced a blockhead born? —
Your Wife.

" Who runs you into debt each day,
Although she knows you've lost at play,
Caring not whether you can pay ?—
Your Wife.

" Who every bright illusion rends,
Proving you never could have friends,
' You were a dupe ?'—at least, pretends
Your Wife.

" Who tells your faults to every dame
She meets, exposing you to shame,
Till half the town rings with your name ?—
Your Wife.

" Ye Benedicts of Fashion, own
Here 's no exaggeration shewn ;
The miseries I relate you've known—
Through Wives."

The love of money, and deference to those who are imagined to possess it, is another striking peculiarity of my compatriots. He, or she, who can boast of wealth, no matter how obtained, is sure of being well received in society; though such persons may be illiterate,

ill-mannered, and not immaculate in reputation. On observing certain individuals, in the circle styling itself exclusive, whose personal merits would never have gained them admission, my ignorant queries as to the why, and wherefore, have been replied to by the assertion, that "he or she was immensely rich;" a reply considered amply explanatory.

"Then he, or she, is probably very generous?" asked I, in my simplicity, supposing that a lavish expenditure on a *clique* proverbial for the derangement of the finances of its members, was the secret cause of the reception of the said rich individual.

"No, quite the contrary," has been the answer; "he is *très avare*, I can assure you:" for no one better knows the value of money, or is less prone to make a generous use of it, than *he* who has no other recommendation.

But what is still stranger, this same reputa-

tion for wealth is considered an excuse for the economy which a deficiency of income alone ought to justify. A man known to be rich may give, not only few, but remarkably bad dinners, and wines whose execrable quality all condemn; yet, still, the very people who would unceremoniously decline a far less objectionable repast, if offered by one of limited means, will freely eat the one, and drink the other; because — the donor is affluent. The parsimony of the wealthy excites no murmurs: people like to dine with them, and to have them at their own boards; why, or wherefore, I cannot discover, unless the feeling may arise in a superstitious desire of consorting with those who are favoured by fortune.

So well understood is this inordinate respect for riches in this country, that not a few instances have been known of men who, with only a moderate income, have, by the stratagem

of pretending to possess a large one, gained a consideration and an ascendance in society, which they otherwise could never have acquired. "Mr. So-and-so is certainly a *millionaire,*" was the excuse for a man of vulgar habits being seen every where, until his death revealed the fact of his supposed million being only a hundred thousand pounds; a fortune more than amply sufficient for all his desires, but the reputation of which would not have attained for him that preponderance in the world which he ambitioned.

Can it then be wondered at, that, seeing the influence wealth bestows, people are more anxious to possess, than fastidious in the mode of acquiring it? Hence, speculations the most unscrupulous, and actions the most reprehensible, are undertaken. If crowned with success, the *mean* is forgotten in the *end;* and if failure ensue, the action, and its consequences,

pass away from the memories of those who knew the guilt of the perpetrator; for, no one here troubles himself to remember a poor man, except to avoid him.

I have now concluded a sketch, which, though it has no recommendation except its truth, may, I trust, *ennuyer* less than the witnessing the scenes described did your affectionate friend,

CAROLINE.

THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM TO EDWARD MORDAUNT, ESQ.

YES, my dear Mordaunt, you are right; I love—passionately, madly, love — Lady Annandale; yet it is a love as devoid of guilt as it is destitute of hope. The slightest betrayal of it would, I am persuaded, exile me from her sight for

ever; and I value the friendship with which she honours me too dearly, to risk losing the least portion of it by any imprudence.

You ask me what I propose to myself, in thus abandoning my heart to so engrossing, so ungovernable a passion? This is a question I have never dared to answer to myself. To meet her every day, to think of her every minute, to dream of her when I close my eyes, and to awake with the blissful certainty of seeing her,—these are my sole objects and aims; and these I may surely indulge without crime.

Mordaunt, if you knew the rapture I experience, when I behold her angelic face assume a more cheerful expression when I approach her; when I observe the deference with which she refers to my opinions, and the sweet and modest confidence with which she utters her own; the innocent delight with which she displays Annandale's hitherto neglected child,

and the pride with which she listens to my remarks on its visible improvement and growing intelligence,—you would not ask what I propose to myself!

The happiness of the present seems all I dare look to; and so dearly do I prize it, that I tremble to anticipate any change.

She admits me to her *boudoir* during the morning, when Miss Montressor and the child only are with her; allows me to read Italian aloud to her while she draws: and there are moments, when seated in this retired and delicious sanctuary, the ladies pursuing their feminine occupations, and the child climbing my knees, that I indulge the illusion that she belongs to me by the most holy tie, and that the child is ours.

I am too soon awakened from this blissful dream, by Miss Montressor's remembering some engagement to be kept, or some letter to be

written, that obliges her to withdraw; and what looks strange, is, that these reminiscences of hers always arrive at a *mal-à-propos* moment, either in the most interesting part of the book we are reading, or in the subject on which we are conversing.

"Pray, do not let me interrupt you, good folk," she invariably says, — "I shall be back in a few minutes;" and off she hurries.

I resume the book, and, whenever a pause occurs, am charmed with the justice and tact of Lady Annandale's reflections. So much feeling, united to such extreme delicacy of perception, I never before encountered.

Often do I continue to read, until her carriage, or saddle-horses are announced; and we both find that it is five o'clock, when we had only imagined it three.

"How time flies!" does she frequently say, on such occasions; "but where can Caroline

Montressor be? she said she would be back in a few minutes."

"Miss Montressor has been in the library, my lady, for the last half-hour, with his lordship," replies the servant.

Does not this look strange? yet it does not seem to inspire Lady Annandale with any suspicions. Is it possible that this artful girl can have any design in thus leaving her friend and me, two hours *tête-à-tête* in the *boudoir*, and being herself half-an-hour in the library with Annandale? But no; she can have no motive. And yet it *does* look strange: I must keep my eye on her; for the account Delaward gave me of her morals justifies suspicion.

Annandale seems totally unconscious of my admiration (adoration would better express the feeling) for his lovely wife. He is continually asking me to dine with them, *en famille*, and to make one of all their parties — invitations I

have not the courage to resist. Yet there are moments when I fancy I have detected significant glances, or malicious smiles on the countenances of some of the corrupt men, and as corrupt women, of our circle, when they see me by Lady Annandale's side; and I almost determine to sacrifice the intoxicating pleasure of her society, rather than subject her purity, which I know to be as spotless as snow ere it lights on earth, to the risk of one unworthy suspicion. I am more jealous of her reputation than ever husband was of that of his wife; and would die rather than expose it to censure.

She rarely speaks of Annandale; and her manner towards him is cold and distant. Of the Delawards she loves to converse.

"Lady Delaward is indeed a happy woman," said she, a few days ago; "for, in her husband she has found the most delightful friend, the most instructive companion, and

the most wise monitor (should she ever need it) with whom woman was ever blessed."

She sighed deeply and involuntarily.

"How vain, then, Lord Nottingham ought to be!" said Miss Montressor; "for you compared him, the other day, to Lord Delaward; and, if my memory does not deceive me, gave the preference to *sa signeurie*," bowing to me.

The cheeks of Lady Annandale became suffused with a bright red; and so visible was her emotion, that, great as was the delight which the knowledge of her flattering opinion of me conferred—a delight that sent the blood circling more briskly through my veins—I was angry with Miss Montressor for having betrayed her confidence.

"I was speaking of Lord Delaward as a husband," said Lady Annandale, with some reserve, and still blushing; "and, consequently,

could not compare Lord Nottingham, who is yet untried in that character, with him."

"You may, however, accurately judge of Lord Nottingham's taste for domesticity," replied Miss Montressor, "from the daily specimens he gives us of it. Does he not read to us, chat with us, moralise with us, and play with the child all the morning?" Lady Annandale positively blushed to her very temples. "Does he not ride out, drive, or boat, with us every day? Does he not escort us to balls, routs, and operas; or spend the evening, *en famille*, with us? And yet, wicked, ungrateful Lady Annandale, after all these decided evidences of a conjugal taste, you can doubt his fitness for domestic life!"

Never was embarrassment more visible than on Lady Annandale's beautiful countenance. She attempted to utter something

about never having doubted that I should always fulfil every duty I had to perform ; and Miss Montressor resumed : —

" Yes, I am sure Lord Nottingham, notwithstanding he looks so grave" (and here she gave me a most equivocal smile), " would be a model for husbands, were he once entered into that happy state. See him with little St. Aubyn on his knee, reading to you while you draw, and then doubt, if you can, what a husband and father he will make. Why, I defy that *rara avis*, Lord Delaward himself, to surpass him!"

I looked gravely in her face while she uttered all this ill-timed flippancy, yet could not ascertain whether it originated in *naïveté* or malice ; but, whichever was the cause, the effect — and it was a painful one — was obvious in Lady Annandale's varying colour and nervous agitation. Luckily, a servant

announced the carriage, and I withdrew; almost hating Miss Montressor for the annoyance she had caused her lovely and sensitive friend.

What if Lady Annandale should become alarmed, now that her attention has been so brusquely called to the subject, by the frequency and length of my visits, and curtail or prohibit them? But why should I anticipate an evil I never could find courage to support? No, she could not be so cruel.

Do I not already, Mordaunt, feel one of the many miseries to which an unlawful passion gives birth? Here am I, trembling at the bare anticipation of being deprived of her society, on the terms I have lately been accustomed to enjoy it; yet not daring to look forward to a continuation of happiness that always seems to me too great to endure.

This it is to love, when destiny has placed an indestructible barrier between us and the

object adored; a barrier never surmounted, but by guilt and despair. I am a Christian, and must never forget that the faith I profess ought to preclude both.

Ever yours,

NOTTINGHAM.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

LA victoire est à moi, ma chère et belle amie! Yes; this cold, this prudish Lady Annandale loves Lord Nottingham; and with a passion such as only tranquil, concentrated women feel.

I see it in a thousand instances: in the bright sparkle of her eyes when he is announced; in the drooping lid that veils them when he approaches; in her heightened colour and embarrassed manner; and, above all, in

the increasing reserve and shrinking modesty of her demeanour towards him.

I catch her looking at the *pendule* when the time of his daily visit approaches: nay, I have positively marked the quickened pulsation of her heart, visible even through the folds of her robe, when his step has been heard; which she can distinguish from any other, as I lately had a proof—and this is one of the many certain symptoms in the malady ycleped love.

We were sitting in her *boudoir* at the time he generally comes, when I heard feet approaching, and said, "here comes *le marquis*."

"No," answered Lady Annandale, "the step is not his;" and her cheek became perfectly crimson when she found my eyes fixed with an expression of surprise on her face. She was right: the step was that of Lord Charles Fitzhardinge, who brought me a note from the *comtesse*.

Lord Nottingham is *un peu bête*, for he appears totally unconscious of the conquest he has achieved; or else he is determined not to avail himself of it. His manner grows every day more profoundly respectful towards her, though it always partook of the Sir Charles Grandison style; and he now approaches her as if she were a queen, and he, the humblest of her liege subjects.

This surely cannot be artifice to dupe me. Lord Annandale *et madame la comtesse* like each other less every day. Her indifference has wounded his vanity, the strongest and most vulnerable of all his feelings; and her reserve and austere coldness to the ladies of the *clique* he is most ambitious to propitiate, has irritated him into opposing her will, by inviting them, *bon gré, malgré*, to his house.

Notre frau gräfinn, who is *si aimable et bon enfant*, when she has every thing her

own way, can, as you know, be not *un peu méchante* when opposed. She has never forgiven Augusta for being so beautiful—a crime of deep die, and rarely pardoned by women—and, to avenge it, she has insisted on exhibiting Lord Annandale as *son amant en titre*, which she thinks an *éclatant* proof of her superiority of attraction over the young beauty, his wife, and an infallible mean of mortifying her.

Notre frau gräfinn is, however, mistaken in this last calculation; for Augusta is so perfectly indifferent towards her lord, that she has never, I do believe, remarked his attentions to her rival. The truth is, her own heart is too deeply occupied to permit her observing the movements of others; and she has too little vanity to be wounded by the proceedings which would be most influential with the majority of women.

Notre comtesse is evidently piqued at Au-

gusta's freedom from jealousy: she had expected to reap an *éclatant* triumph from the tears and anger of Lady Annandale; but, these being wanting, she considers her victory incomplete.

She is everlastingly directing Lord Annandale's attention to what she calls *les gaucheries et sottises de son épouse*, which are her terms for designating the reserved demeanour and constrained politeness of Augusta; whose avoidance of her, the *comtesse* resents as an unmerited injury, which she endeavours to excite him to punish.

With this charitable object, she is perpetually asserting *qu'il n'est pas maître chez lui;* a charge so peculiarly offensive to a weak man, that, to refute it, there is no folly he is not ready to commit. The proof of the truth of her charge, she says, exists in the fact, that he no longer dare have his house open, as

formerly, for those delicious *petits soupers* that once rendered his home the envy of all the *élite* of fashion.

She wounds his *amour propre*, by continually pointing out the marked indifference of his wife for him; and then she endeavours to apply a salve to the wounds she inflicts, by artfully adding, —

"*Imaginez vous, mon cher, une petite sotte comme elle, d'avoir l'air de ne se soucier pas d'un bel homme comme vous — bien élevé, distingué, et spirituel; vraiment, il y a de quoi faire perdre patience.*"

Still the wounds rankle, and he likes the *comtesse* less every day, for being the instrument to inflict them.

He turns to me for consolation; and I have so thoroughly penetrated into the very inmost folds of his character, that I know how to administer it more efficaciously than any other

woman could; who, not having the same motives and opportunities for discovering and analysing his weaknesses, could not mould them to her will as I do.

My flattery is administered in small, but judicious doses; much on the principle of the homœopathic system, which first irritates the symptoms of the malady, in order to enable the practitioner to ascertain its nature, and then soothes it. My doses are too small to give distaste; not that I ever found any patients complain of their excess, provided they are amply sugared; but their paucity renders them more valued, and the taker more anxious for a repetition of them.

I extol him more by innuendos than by fulsome, unequivocal admiration. I decry the look of all men whose style does not, in some degree, resemble his own; and those who most approach this, my implied standard

of perfection and manly beauty, I remark, would be indeed handsome, if they possessed such and such features, — hair, eyes, or teeth, —always particularising those peculiar to him.

A good opportunity was offered me a few days ago of administering to his inordinate vanity. The Comte Walkarinsky, brother to the Comtesse Hohenlinden, has arrived here; and is pronounced, by the ladies of our *clique*, to be the handsomest man ever seen. He certainly is extremely good-looking, and possesses *l'air noble et distingué*, so rare and attractive. When several of the women were commenting on him, I, while assenting to his claim to manly beauty, observed, that his, however, was not precisely the style that I preferred. Then I proceeded to give a minute description *en beau* of Lord Annandale — of course, without naming him—as my *idéal* of perfection, which I saw with a glance he immediately appro-

priated. You should have beheld him at that moment, to be aware of the extent of self-complacency to which the gratified vanity of a weak man may conduct him: and the overflowing gratitude to which a judicious flattery gives birth.

You know how remarkably handsome the Comte Hohenlinden is: well, *ma chère*, his brother-in-law is infinitely superior: judge, then, how delighted Lord Annandale must have been with my implied compliment. *Notre amie la comtesse*, with her flaxen locks and light-blue eyes, never could be taken for a Polonaise; while *monsieur son frère*, with dark sparkling orbs and raven curls, could never be mistaken for any other than a Pole.

Last evening we were surprised by a note, announcing the arrival of Lord and Lady Vernon. Lady Annandale instantly commanded the carriage, in order that she might go and see them;

but her lord *hoped,* in a tone that looked more like dictation than entreaty, that she would *not* leave home, for that he expected some people to look in.

" I am sorry to be compelled to refuse your request," replied Lady Annandale, coldly; " but I cannot permit my father and mother to pass their first evening in London, without seeing them."

" What possible difference can a few hours make?" urged *le mari,* with a most marital air; " and will not an early visit to-morrow, answer every purpose?"

" It would neither satisfy my impatient affection, nor my sense of duty," said *l'épouse.*

Milor bit his lip: and *miladi* rang for her shawl.

" You would much oblige me by not going out this evening," said Lord Annandale, pertinaciously returning to the subject; " for it

will look so strange to have you from home when ladies come here."

"I should certainly comply with your wishes," replied Augusta, "if my own feelings only were to be sacrificed; but, as my father and mother rely upon seeing me, I cannot disappoint them."

"Then I am to consider that *my* wishes are, in your estimation, utterly valueless?" rejoined *milor*, growing angry.

"I am sorry you should entertain this opinion," said Lady Annandale, as, rising from her chair, the carriage being at that moment announced, she left the room; deputing me *à faire les honneurs pour elle* to the expected visitors.

Her husband, for the first time, was guilty of the rudeness, *purement Anglais*, of not handing her to her carriage, and allowed her to depart without even a kind message to *le papa et*

la maman ; an omission that, I am sure, wounded her much more than the want of politeness to herself.

Before she had time to reach the hall, the carriage of *la comtesse* arrived : and when *sa seigneurie* entered the drawing-room, her countenance displayed evident symptoms of ill-humour.

" *Eh bien, mon ami ! n'est-ce pas, je vous avais dit que votre femme est bien la maîtresse chez elle ?*"

Annandale tried to explain the motive of her absence ; but the *comtesse*, with a smile of derision, said,—

" *Bah ! bah ! tout cela est bel et bon ; mais je prévois, qu'en peu de temps votre maison sera la plus triste de tout Londres, et vous, mon cher, le mari le plus subjugé par votre pie grièche de femme. Elle n'a pas même pris la peine de me faire ses excuses quand je l'ai rencontrée dans*

le vestibule. Mais, au reste, les jeunes femmes Anglaises sont si mal élevées, que cela ne m'étonne pas beaucoup. Ma foi, Talleyrand avait bien raison de dire, que les dames en Angleterre sont si peu spirituelles, que la seule conversation dans laquelle elles excellent, est la conversation criminelle, dont les journaux fournissent trop de preuves."

The *grossierté de notre amie* evidently disgusted Lord Annandale; but I could hardly retain a serious face to hear her reprehending, with such severity, the want of good breeding in others, while she herself was committing the most gross violation of all its laws.

Lord Nottingham came soon after; and, had you witnessed the change in his countenance on glancing round the room and discovering that Lady Annandale was not there, you would have been convinced, as I am, of the deep passion he feels for her.

"Where is Lady Annandale—I hope not ill?" faltered he.

"Oh, yes! vera ill, indeed: so ill dat she see nobody," replied the *comtesse*, before either Lord Annandale or I had time to answer.

"Good heavens! how long has she been ill?" asked Nottingham, with the deepest anxiety painted on his face.

"*Mon Dieu! milor, qu'est-ce que vous avez? vraiment, vouz avez l'air d'un mourant*," said the *comtesse*, most maliciously drawing Annandale's attention to his friend.

I took compassion on him, and explained that Lady Annandale was gone to her father's, as they had arrived that evening; and, for the first time since our acquaintance, he seemed pleased with me.

Ten or twelve of the old *habitués* of Annandale House, in its palmy days of bachelorship, now dropped in: but Lady Annandale

returned not until they had nearly all gone, and then sought her chamber, without entering the *salon*.

I saw that Lord Annandale was really piqued with her — nay, more, that the malice of *notre comtesse* had not failed of its intended effect; for I observed him abstracted several times during the evening.

I am glad that she has saved me the disagreeable, and somewhat dangerous task, of first opening his eyes to the passion of Lord Nottingham for Lady Annandale. I dreaded that the communication would render the communicator disagreeable in his sight; an effect often induced by the power of association. Consequently, I have been hitherto guarded: but *now*, the *comtesse* has *brusqué* the affair, the rest is easy; for Annandale's jealousy once awakened, it will not easily sleep, and will

find sustenance in every incident, however trivial.

Adieu, ma belle amie! aimez toujours votre

CAROLINE.

THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE TO THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD.

I WOULD have sooner replied to your letter, my dearest Mary, had I not lately been so depressed in spirits, that I had scarcely courage enough for the exertion.

My position becomes every day more painful and embarrassing. Lord Annandale is so wedded to society, and precisely to that portion of it which I can least approve or respect, that, finding me unwilling to sanction the presence

of its members beneath his roof, he invites them in defiance of my disapprobation. The Comtesse Hohenlinden is a daily guest; and my marked coldness produces no other effect on her, than the display of a species of rude negligence too pointed to remain unnoticed.

Some evenings ago, I was delighted to receive a few hurried lines, announcing the arrival of my dear father and mother. To order the carriage, and go to them, was the natural impulse; and indeed my impatience would hardly permit me even to wait for the carriage. Judge, then, of my annoyance, when Lord Annandale coldly proposed my postponing the visit until next day, saying, that "he expected some friends to drop in."

To disappoint those who were so anxiously longing to see me, I felt would be most unkind; though to have obliged him, I would have sacrificed my own impatience, excessive as it was.

Lord Annandale's manner of urging his wishes, however, betrayed so much coldness of heart, as not to dispose me to a compliance with them; so I persevered, and went. In the vestibule I encountered the Comtesse Hohenlinden, who uttered some bantering remark on my going out alone; and the reserve with which I received her observations seemed to offend more than correct her; for I understand she complained of my manner to Lord Annandale.

You may easily imagine the joy with which I found myself once more pressed to the hearts of my father and mother; and their gratification at seeing me. I felt, beneath their roof, as if I had found a haven, after having been long exposed to tempest and danger; and only wished I was never to leave them again.

I have grown old within the last few months; years,— long years, seem to have flown over my head in that brief period: and I

shrink from that world, misnamed the gay, into which I was so eager to enter, with fear and trembling; for in it I have found only disappointment and regret.

Before leaving my father and mother, I asked them to dine with me the next day, being the first invitation I have ever given since I entered Lord Annandale's house; and, I may add, the first dinner in it that I ever anticipated with pleasurable emotions.

What, then, were my surprise and indignation, when I informed him of it next morning, to be told, that it was impossible; for, that he had engaged a party of gay young people, who would by no means suit Lord and Lady Vernon, and who would be quite put out of their way by persons of that age.

I ventured a remonstrance, but was silenced by the avowal, that "the party coming to dinner would vote his house the greatest bore in

the world, and himself, the host on earth the most devoid of tact, if they encountered such a very patriarchal pair in it as my father and mother."

Wounded and irritated, I told him that, as he declined receiving them, I should certainly go and dine with them.

"Then you will commit a very ill-bred action," said he, angrily, "and expose yourself to very disagreeable remarks, if, after your conduct last night, you again absent yourself from the same guests."

He quitted the room, evidently vexed; leaving me to weep over the consequence of my own folly, in having married a man of whose character, feelings, or pursuits, I knew nothing; and who every day proves to me, in a thousand ways, that he is the most of all unfitted to contribute to my happiness.

He has not yet seen, or sought to see, my

father and mother, who are evidently offended at this neglect. They have asked me a thousand questions about him, which I have replied to in a manner not to alarm them for my happiness; though all hope of ever attaining that blessing with him has for some time left me.

It is wrong to pain you, dearest Mary, with regrets; but you are the only person to whom I dare disclose them.

Ever yours,

AUGUSTA.

FROM THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM TO EDWARD MORDAUNT, ESQ.

You were right, my dear Mordaunt; I should have fled from the presence of this too lovely woman, when I first discovered the state of my heart.

That its tumultuous feelings are no secret to others, I have had more than one proof; and the persons who have given them are, perhaps, the two most dangerous in which such a secret could be vested, being no other than the Comtesse Hohenlinden and Miss Montressor — two women who are capable of using the discovery in any way suited to their views.

The *comtesse* is deficient in the tact and good-breeding which characterise Miss Montressor; for, in her desire to do a malicious action to any one whom she dislikes, she will not scruple to commit any rudeness.

She wounds with an axe; while Miss Montressor uses a Damascus blade, so finely tempered, that, though the incision is far more deep, the pain is much less felt.

On entering Lady Annandale's boudoir this morning, I found her pale, and her eyes still bore evident traces of tears. To my inquiries

about her health, and congratulations on the arrival of her father and mother, she answered briefly, but, as usual, kindly; yet I fancied I observed a constraint and coldness in her manner very different to its general tone of amity.

"Annandale asked me to dine with you to-day," said I; "and I have just come from Lord and Lady Vernon, who told me they also are to dine here."

The tears now positively stole down the cheeks of Lady Annandale; and Miss Montressor left the room. I tried to utter some vague words, I hardly knew what, of consolation; and she, wiping away the tears that continued, in spite of her efforts to stop them, still to spring in her beautiful eyes, explained her emotion, by saying, that her joy at seeing her father and mother had made her nervous.

There was a constraint and *gêne* between us, of which, though most sensible of the effect, I could not divine the cause; and she seemed to experience these feelings still more acutely than I did, as she asked me to ring the bell, that she might have little St. Aubyn brought down from the nursery, evidently with the intention of interrupting our *tête-à-tête*.

When the nurse came, Lady Annandale demanded why she had not, as usual, brought the child to her; and the nurse replied, that the footman told her it was her ladyship's orders that Lord St. Aubyn was not to be taken to the boudoir until sent for.

"And his little lordship has been so impatient to come, my lady," added nurse, "that I could hardly keep him quiet."

"You are always to bring him here every day," said Lady Annandale: "but I shall inquire into this order, for there must be some

mistake," and again she desired me to ring the bell.

To her inquiries as to who had given this message, the servant stated, that Miss Montressor had told him to deliver it. At this moment, Annandale entered the room, looking extremely out of humour; and, scarcely vouchsafing more than a nod to me, he angrily commented on "the noise that tiresome boy," as he designated his son, "had been making during the last two hours;" the nursery being over his library.

"You spoil the brat," said he, "by accustoming him to come here, and then ordering him not to be brought."

So saying, he briskly left the room, before his wife could utter a word in explanation.

I knew not whether to remain or go away—a suspicion of some treachery on the part of Miss Montressor, in giving the order, having

taken possession of my mind, and I could not banish it.

Lady Annandale appeared shocked and wounded by the harshness of her husband, and was silent and abstracted.

Miss Montressor returned in an hour, and, when questioned by Lady Annandale, stated that, seeing how low and nervous her friend had been all the morning, she feared the child would too much fatigue her; and had, therefore, ordered that it should not be brought.

This explanation may be true, and she looked perfectly unembarrassed while making it: but how came Annandale to know that the order had been given, without knowing, also, from whom it had emanated?

These circumstances seem very suspicious, to use the least offensive term that can be applied to them: and more appears to be meant than meets the eye.

On leaving Annandale House, I encountered Lord Vernon, who said, "Well, as you are not to dine at my daughter's to day, perhaps you will dine with me; for I have had a note from her to inform me, that she will dine with us, instead of our coming to her."

I assented to the proposition, though I thought it strange that neither Lord nor Lady Annandale had mentioned any thing on the subject to me; yet such was my desire to meet her who occupies all my thoughts, that I readily availed myself of the invitation.

I presented myself at the usual hour at Lord Vernon's; where, in a few minutes after, arrived Lady Annandale, apologising for her lord's absence by saying, that he had an engagement, and could not come.

I was in the embrasure of the window, looking at a print, while this was uttered, and consequently she did not see me; but when she

did, she positively blushed crimson, and her confusion was so evident, that I feared her father and mother would observe it.

They did not, however; and attributed her increased colour to any but the right cause. She appeared ill at ease, though evidently endeavouring to conceal her embarrassment; and the excessive affection of Lord and Lady Vernon, displayed in a thousand ways, excited her nearly to tears.

This simple and excellent couple are almost patriarchal in their manners; and, unaccustomed to disguise their feelings, cordially expressed all the delight they experienced at having their daughter again at their paternal board.

"I could almost cheat myself into fancying that it was still my darling Gusty," said Lord Vernon, patting her head.

"And am I not so, father?" asked Lady Annandale, faintly smiling.

"Not quite, not quite, my child!" replied he, with a mournful shake of the head; "for you know that you *would*, whether I liked it or not, give yourself to another. Ah, Gusty! you dont know how difficult we find it to live without you."

It was not in Lady Annandale's eyes alone that tears started at that moment; for her father, mother, and myself, were all alike affected.

"I look upon Lord Nottingham as one of my own family — indeed, as a son," resumed the good old man; "for he tried to console me for your loss, my dear child, and succeeded best in the effort, by appearing to regret you nearly as much as we did."

Had you but seen Lady Annandale's face at that moment. In an instant, her eyes met mine, and their expression of sweetness I shall

never forget, nor the bright suffusion of her beautiful cheeks.

"Was he not our kindest consoler, my love?" resumed Lord Vernon, appealing to his wife; who, laying her hand affectionately on mine, said, "she never could forget how patiently I had listened to all their regrets, and commendations of their child."

"Patiently, indeed," pursued Lord Vernon; "why, he seemed just as fond of dwelling on the subject as we were; and not like Miss Montressor, who always appeared to be thinking of something else when we spoke of our absent darling."

How did I wish, during this *scène de famille*, that I stood in the same relation to all the parties present that Annandale does! How happy, how transcendently happy I should be! And may I not, without subject-

ing myself to the imputation of vanity, say, how much happier *they* would be? for I certainly am more formed for domestic life than is Annandale. But why dwell on such vain thoughts? Happiness like this was never meant for me.

"Had I known in the morning that we were to be a *parti quarré*," said Lord Vernon, "I would have engaged a box at Drury Lane, and taken Gusty to see my favourite afterpiece. It would be quite a treat to have her at the theatre under my chaperonage, as in former times, without any husband to remind me that she is no longer all my own."

I immediately offered my box; and, the family-coach being ordered, to the great delight of Lord Vernon, we were driven to Drury Lane; where we arrived in time for the third act of *Othello*.

When Desdemona pleaded in vain to her father for forgiveness, Lord Vernon positively grew angry.

"My favourite Shakespeare was wrong in this view of human nature," said the good old man; "he did not understand the heart of a father: if he did, he would have known that a parent *could not* spurn his weeping child. No; this is not natural. Don't you agree with me, my love?" turning to his wife.

"Lord Vernon thinks the hearts of all fathers like his own," said Lady Vernon to me, and looking at him with eyes beaming with affection, while Lady Annandale placed her hand in his.

A large private box, opposite to the one in which we were seated, was now thrown open; and Lord Annandale entered it, leading in the Comtesse Hohenlinden, and followed by

Lady Mellicent and Miss Montressor, escorted by Lord Charles Fitzhardinge, and three or four other young men of their *clique*.

I felt annoyed at their presence; and observed that Lady Annandale appeared still more so, as she shrank back behind the curtain. The eagle eyes of the Comtesse Hohenlinden soon discovered us; and the glasses of all the party, save those of Lord Annandale and Miss Montressor, were levelled at us.

The *comtesse* attempted not to conceal the mingled mirth and surprise that our presence excited; and Annandale looked more discomposed than I ever saw him. It was plain that the apparition of her husband and his party had given pain to Lady Annandale. She directed to me an imploring look not to remark their vicinity to her father and mother, who had not noticed it, being wholly occupied with the performance, or commenting on it.

The Comtesse Hohenlinden seemed to be engaged in an earnest conversation with Lord Annandale, while, from time to time, they cast angry looks at our box. What can all this mean? Perhaps, after all, I was expected to dine at Annandale House, and my presence with its mistress occasioned the apparent surprise I witnessed. But why, then, if I was expected there, did she go out to dine? All this is a mystery, to the solution of which I have no clue. Perhaps, by calling at Annandale House to-morrow, I shall be furnished with one.

Lady Vernon, being fatigued, proposed our leaving the theatre before the afterpiece was concluded; and her daughter, who seemed relieved by our departure, requested that we would leave her at her own door.

As I handed her from the carriage to the hall, I observed her servants exchange looks of

suspicion; and then glance inquisitively at the coach, as if to ascertain whether it was occupied.

Such is the dignified reserve of Lady Annandale, that I dared not venture a question to her, though impatiently longing to know,—why, if I was not forbidden to dine at her house, she had gone to her father's.

I left off writing to you last night, my dear Mordaunt, that I might tell you the result of my visit to Annandale House. I am more mystified than ever, and know not what to imagine.

On calling at the usual hour to-day, I found Lady Annandale and Miss Montressor in the boudoir; the former pale and sad, and the latter walking up and down the room, with the air of one who had been giving advice.

"Why did you not dine here yesterday?" asked Miss Montressor, with an authoritative

tone; "Lord Annandale expected you, and was offended at having a Banquo chair in our gay party. You were wrong, not in preferring the society of Lady Annandale,—*cela va sans dire*,—but in *affichant* that preference, by appearing at the theatre with her. Your presence together led to several ill-natured comments and malicious interpretations by the whole party, which not all my tact and zeal could avert; and I displayed no want of either, I assure you. Such imprudence is very injurious to Lady Annandale's reputation; and, if you value it, you must be much more guarded."

"Good heavens, Caroline! what do you—what *can* you mean?" asked Lady Annandale, blushing to her very temples, and then becoming as pale as death.

"I mean that you, my dear friend," replied Miss Montressor, "are young and inexperienced, and, consequently, unaware of the danger

to which your reputation is exposed by Lord Nottingham's imprudence."

"I am aware of no imprudence," rejoined Lady Annandale, proudly; "and my reputation depends on myself alone."

I now endeavoured to explain to Miss Montressor, how my dining at Lord Vernon's, when I expected to dine at Annandale House, occurred; but she provokingly answered, "that, altogether, it was a very unfortunate mistake, and had done much mischief."

"I will, however," she added, "go and write two lines to the Comtesse Hohenlinden, to explain the circumstance, and prevent her, if not yet too late, from retailing her version of the affair to all the town."

She then hurried from the apartment before I had time to say a word, retreating by a private door that leads to her room.

She had not been gone ten minutes, when

the other door of the room was attempted to be opened, but in vain. We, for a few moments, passively heard the efforts, concluding that each would succeed; till, finding that they did not, I went to ascertain the cause—when, to my perfect astonishment, I discovered that the door was fastened on the *inside*.

This atrocious act could only have been perpetrated intentionally, and by Miss Montressor; for no one except her had approached that door since I had entered it: and a conviction of the most execrable treachery instantly flashed across my mind.

When I opened the door, the groom of the chambers and one of the footmen were there; and the expression of their countenances fully explained the vile suspicions this insidious deed had induced them to entertain.

Lady Annandale's appearance, too, was, most unfortunately, more likely to confirm

than check their impressions; for she was greatly agitated, and in an almost fainting state.

The groom of the chambers presented her with a *billet*, and then withdrew, and she confirmed my worst suspicions of treachery, by stating that it was from Miss Montressor.

There is some dark plot hatching against the honour and peace of Lady Annandale, I am now convinced; and I am, probably, intended to be made the instrument of it. Why else was the door fastened inside ere Miss Montressor withdrew? and why write a note instead of coming back in person, if she had aught to say?

This manœuvre must have been practised to furnish the servants with an opportunity of discovering that the door *was* locked. Yes, there must be some vile scheme in contemplation; but what can be the motive? Bad as my opinion of Miss Montressor has ever been, and capable

as I think her of much vice, still I can see no adequate reason for her connivance in a conspiracy, the sole object of which must be the ruin of a person I believe her really to like.

"Leave me, Lord Nottingham," said Lady Annandale, pale as death; "I am not well, and wish to retire to my chamber."

I obeyed her commands; and, as I passed through the hall, observed the servants all whispering and eyeing me, in a manner that convinced me they had formed the most injurious suspicions. Never shall I forgive myself, if, through the frequency of my visits, I have exposed the fair fame of the most innocent, as well as the most lovely, woman in the world to animadversion.

Yes, you were right; I ought to have fled from her too dangerous presence when I first discovered that I loved her: but that love was and is so pure, and so wholly devoid of

hope, that I madly fancied its indulgence could not profane its idol.

I hate myself when I think, that to me this angelic creature owes the humiliation of hearing a lecture on prudence from the lips of such a woman as Miss Montressor — a woman as unworthy to approach, as she is incapable of appreciating, her.

On leaving Annandale House, I proceeded to Lord Vernon's, where I found the good old couple gravely talking together.

"Do you know, my dear lord, we are not quite satisfied with the conduct of your friend, and our son-in-law," said Lord Vernon to me.

"Why, would you believe it," added Lady Vernon, "he has not once seen us since we came to town; for, though he called yesterday and was informed we were at home, he never offered to come in, but merely left his card and drove off." "Sir William Vernon,

our neighbour in the country, has been here this morning," resumed Lord Vernon; "and he told us that he saw Lord Annandale, with Miss Montressor and a party of fashionables, at Drury Lane last night, opposite to us. Now, only fancy his not having even the politeness to come to our box, if only for half an hour!—I don't understand all this, Lord Nottingham," said Lord Vernon, after a pause; "but such conduct, on the part of your friend, argues but ill for the happiness of our darling child."

"I observed she was changed the moment I saw her," observed Lady Vernon; "she is thinner and paler, and her spirits are no longer the same — she, that used to be all gaiety and sunshine. Would to God she had never married Lord Annandale!"—A wish that my heart echoed.

"I must see into all this," said Lord Vernon; "my darling Gusty shall not be made unhappy if I have the power to prevent

it. Shall she, my dear?" resumed he, turning to his wife.

Lady Vernon shook her head, as she replied, "Alas, my dear friend! the happiness of children does not depend on their parents: if it did, our daughter would never have known a moment's pain."

I left them expecting a visit from Lady Annandale, which, from the state of evident agitation in which I saw her, I fear she will not be able to make. You will hear soon again from

Your sincere friend,

NOTTINGHAM.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

AFFAIRS advance here, *ma chère amie*, even more rapidly than I had contemplated. *La*

belle Auguste est tellement entétée, that she compromises herself more than my most sanguine expectations ever led me to anticipate. I should be more disposed to regret her folly if I possessed her confidence; but I am hurt at finding her growing every day more reserved to me: nor will she, though I have frequently probed her heart, acknowledge the passion that, I am convinced, is consuming it, for her *preux chevalier*, Lord Nottingham.

So little disposed is she to repose this secret in my breast, that I can see she resents my leaving her alone with him. It was but a few days ago, that, more than suspecting she had had a conjugal *tête-à-tête* with her lord, which, judging from the redness of her eyes, could not have been agreeable, I thought that, with her softened feelings, a *tête-à-tête* with her lover might produce an *éclaircissement* between them. He, of course, as I concluded, would demand some question as to the source of her visible

depression, and an explanation of their mutual feelings would ensue. To secure them from interruption, on leaving the room, I charged the footman to tell the nurse that it was her lady's orders that the child should not be brought until she rang for him. I guessed this order would give rise to evil suspicions among the servants, as well as keep Augusta and her Adonis free from interruption until he had declared his passion. But, would you believe it, *ma chère*, I had not left her boudoir five minutes before she rang for the child; and, on asking the nurse why she had not brought him as hitherto, the whole story of my interference was discovered. She was more angry with me than I had ever seen her before; for she appeared to have a latent suspicion that I prohibited the boy's admission in order that she might be left alone with Lord Nottingham. I, however, extricated myself from this scrape, by saying, with a most innocent face, that I only

acted thus because I saw she was ill and depressed, and that I feared the noise of the child would increase her dejection.

The best of the affair was, that Lord Annandale heard the boy crying violently, and sent to learn the cause; when the officious servant informed him, that "his little lordship cried to go to her ladyship."

"Why the devil don't they take him, then?" asked the kind father.

"Her ladyship has given orders that he is not to be admitted until she rings for him to be brought, my lord," was the reply. This reply has ignited the first spark of a jealousy, not easily to be extinguished, in the breast of his lordship, who happened to know that his *cara sposa* was, at that moment, *tête-à-tête* with Lord Nottingham; as I had gone to the library to ask him for a frank, which *I did not want*, and casually observed, that I had been writing letters in my own apartment. Annandale has

lived so much among the most vicious of our ladies of fashion, that it would be difficult to make him believe that two young people of different sexes could meet frequently, and alone, without guilt; consequently, from the appearance, he jumps quickly to the conclusion, and has already, I am persuaded, condemned his wife.

The *comtesse* misses no opportunity of drawing his attention to the *petits soins* of *le beau marquis;* which, though of a most respectful character, are, nevertheless, too unremitting not to be remarked. The dignified reserve of Lady Annandale, so unusual in so very young a woman, *sa seigneurie* affects to attribute to hypocrisy; while, I am convinced, it proceeds from consciousness of a preference that alarms her virtue, and which she thus attempts to repress. *Pauvre petite!* she will, one day, have to thank me for breaking the chains I assisted her to forge; and for enabling her to

assume others, which will press less heavily. Yes, she will be a very happy woman as the wife of Lord Nottingham: for, independent of their attachment, which, I am sure, is, or will be, of the most fervent and romantic character, they are both more formed for domestic than fashionable life; and will, therefore, retire to the seclusion of some one of his *châteaux*, without entertaining a single regret for the pleasures of London. The patriarchal papa and mamma of my lady, also, will gain by the exchange of sons-in-law; for Nottingham acts towards them as if already he stood in that relation, while Annandale treats them with perfect *nonchalance*.

The individuals who compose our circle have already commenced commenting very freely on the attentions of Lord Nottingham to Lady Annandale. Their *liaison* is looked on as a thing no longer doubtful, and furnishes a topic of general conversation, and an object for the small facetiousness of the fashionable

pretenders to wit. Lord Annandale perceives this; and his vanity, the most sensitive of all his qualities, writhes under the infliction, which wounds not his heart—if hearts such men have.

Little does Augusta suspect that her conduct is the subject of remark, or that her virtue is questioned. How shocked she would be at the bare notion of it!

I told you of her going to welcome the arrival of her papa and mamma *en ville*, in defiance of the request of her husband to remain at home. This proceeding piqued him exceedingly; but not near so much so as her dining with them the next day, though he had a party, and ladies too, to dine with him. He apologised for her absence by saying that Lady Vernon was unwell, and that Lady Annandale had gone to nurse her,—an *historiette* at which the *comtesse* opened her eyes to their fullest extent, and, with that *air goguenard* for which, you may remember, she was so famous, burst into

a laugh rather louder than *les bienséances* permit in an English aristocratic circle. Seeing that Annandale looked vexed and embarrassed, I came to his aid, by adding, that Lady Annandale was the most affectionate daughter in the world, and never quitted her father and mother whenever they had the slightest indisposition. He looked his thanks; while the *comtesse* maliciously whispered in Annandale's ear, but loud enough for me to hear, that it was strange so loving a daughter appeared to be so *un*loving a wife.

When dinner was announced, it was discovered that Lord Nottingham, who was expected, was absent; and, as Annandale has a peculiar dislike to a vacant place at his table, he was not a little discomposed by the non-appearance of his friend.

"How very droll it is," said *notre comtesse*, "that Lord Nottingham has not come; for I heard him last night promise you."

Annandale bit his lip.

" Perhaps, as *miladi* has gone to nurse her mamma, *milord* has gone to keep company with the papa," continued the *comtesse,* with a laugh, which was echoed by the whole party around.

I saw that the host was deeply mortified at this open and indelicate insinuation, though most anxious to conceal his feelings; and, therefore, I changed the conversation, led it into lively subjects, gave utterance to some of my most brilliant *bon-mots,* and, in short, played the hostess *à ravir.* I had, at Annandale's request, taken his wife's place at table; and I resolved to make him sensible of the different manner in which it was filled, and how much the gaiety of a dinner depends on the mistress of the *fête.* Yet, while executing this determination, I took care not to throw *him* into the back-ground; but, *au contraire,* drew him out, applauded whatever he said that was

passable, and glossed over what was stupid. In short, I put all the party so much at their ease, and rendered them so satisfied with themselves, and, *par conséquence*, with me, that Lord Charles Fitzhardinge declared aloud, that I made the most delightful hostess he had ever seen, and was precisely calculated to be at the head of a table that was to give the ton to fashionable society. None of this success was lost on Lord Annandale, whom I detected looking at me more frequently than during all the time of our previous acquaintance, and evidently more admiringly too.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY J. MOYES, CASTLE STREET, LEICESTER SQUARE.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 041409530